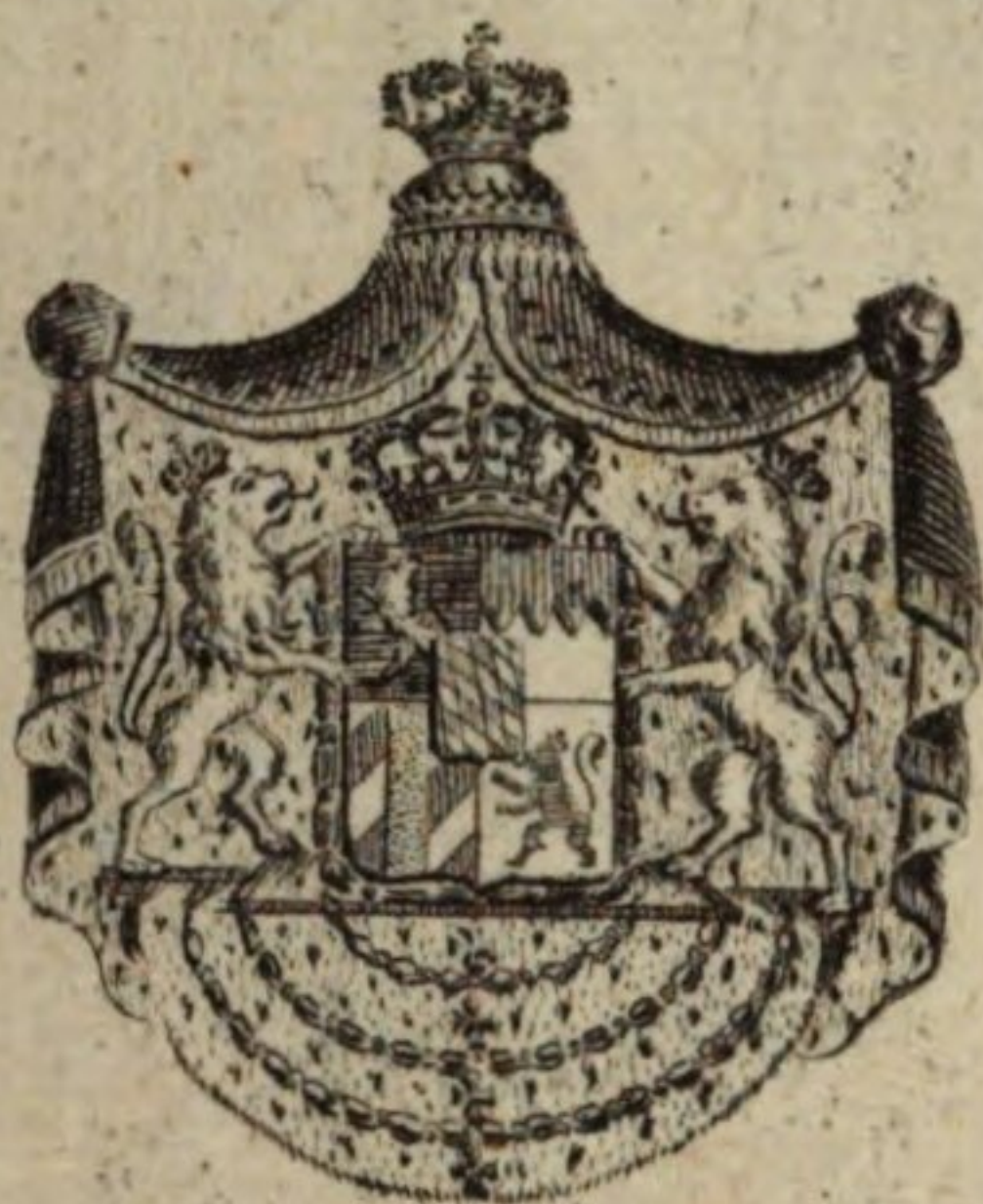




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RED ROVER.

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THE
RED ROVER,
A TALE.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF THE PILOT, etc., etc.

« Ye speak like honest men: pray God ye prove so! »

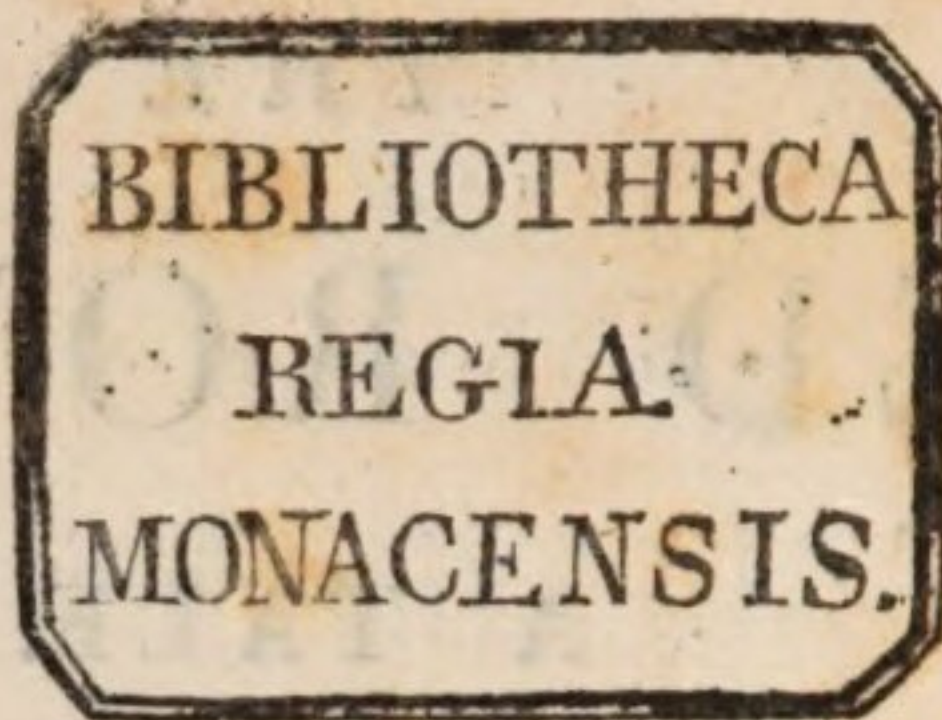
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1827.



BIBLIOTHECA

REGIA

MONACENSIS.



THE
RED ROVER.

CHAPTER I.

—— « The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient; — three thousand ducats; — I think I may take his bond. »

Merchant of Venice.

As the day advanced, the appearances of a fresh sea breeze setting in gradually grew stronger; and, with the increase of the wind, were to be seen all the symptoms of an intention to leave the harbour on the part of the Bristol trader. The sailing of a large ship was an event of much more importance in an American port, sixty years ago, than at the present hour, when a score is frequently seen to arrive and depart from one haven in a single day. Although

claiming to be inhabitants of one of the principal towns of the colony, the good people of Newport did not witness the movements on board the 'Caroline' with that species of indolent regard which is the fruit of satiety in sights as well as in graver things, and with which, in the course of time, the evolutions of even a fleet come to be contemplated. On the contrary, the wharfs were crowded with boys, and indeed with idlers of every growth. Even many of the more considerate and industrious of the citizens were seen loosening the close grasp they usually kept on the precious minutes, and allowing them to escape uncounted, though not entirely unheeded, as they yielded to the ascendancy of curiosity over interest, and strayed from their shops, and their work-yards, to gaze upon the noble spectacle of a moving ship.

The tardy manner in which the crew of the 'Caroline' made their preparations, however, exhausted the patience of more than one time-saving citizen. Quite as many of the better sort of the spectators had left the wharfs as still remained, and yet the vessel spread to the

breeze but the solitary sheet of canvass which has been already named. Instead of answering the wishes of hundreds of weary eyes, the noble ship was seen sheering about her anchor, inclining from the passing wind, as her bows were alternately turned to the right and to the left, like a restless courser restrained by the grasp of the groom, chafing his bit, and with difficulty keeping those limbs upon the earth with which he is shortly to bound around the ring. After more than an hour of unaccountable delay, a rumour was spread among the crowd that an accident had occurred, by which some important individual, belonging to the complement of the vessel, was severely injured. But this rumour passed away also, and was nearly forgotten, when a sheet of flame was seen issuing from a bow-port of the 'Caroline,' driving before it a cloud of curling and mounting smoke, and which was succeeded by the instant roar of a discharge of artillery. A bustle, like that which usually precedes the immediate announcement of any long attended event, took place among the weary expectants on the land, and every one now felt certain, that,

whatever might have occurred, it was settled that the ship should proceed.

Of all this delay, the several movements on board, the subsequent signal of sailing, and of the impatience in the crowd, Wilder had been a grave and close observer. Posted with his back against the upright fluke of a condemned anchor, on a wharf a little apart from that occupied by most of the other spectators, he had remained an hour in the same position, scarcely bending his look to his right hand or to his left. When the gun was fired he started, not with the nervous impulse which had made a hundred others do precisely the same thing, but to turn an anxious and rapid glance along the streets that came within the range of his eye. From this hasty and uneasy examination, he soon returned into his former reclining posture, though the wandering of his glances, and the whole expression of his meaning countenance, would have told an observer that some event, to which the young mariner looked forward with excessive interest, was on the eve of its consummation. As minute after minute, however, rolled by, his composure

was gradually restored, and a smile of satisfaction lighted his features, while his lips moved like those of a man who expressed his pleasure in a soliloquy. It was in the midst of these agreeable meditations, that the sound of many voices met his ears; and, turning, he saw a large party within a few yards of where he stood. He was not slow to detect among them the forms of Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, attired in such a manner as to leave no doubt that they were at length on the eve of embarking.

A cloud, driving before the sun, does not produce a greater change in the aspect of the earth, than was wrought in the expression of Wilder's countenance, by this unexpected sight. He was just implicitly relying on the success of an artifice, which, though sufficiently shallow, he flattered himself was deep enough to act on the timidity and credulity of woman; and, now, was he suddenly awoke from his self-gratulation, to prove the utter disappointment of his hopes. Muttering a suppressed but deep execration against the perfidy of his confederate, he shrunk as much

as possible behind the fluke of the anchor, and fastened his eyes sullenly on the ship.

The party which accompanied the travellers to the water side was, like all other parties made to take leave of valued friends, taciturn and restless. Those who spoke, did so with a rapid and impatient utterance, as though they wished to hurry the very separation they regretted; and the features of those who said nothing looked full of meaning. Wilder heard several affectionate and warm-hearted wishes given, and promises extorted, from youthful voices, all of which were answered in the soft and mournful tones of Gertrude, and yet he obstinately refused to bend even a stolen look in the direction of the speakers.

At length, a footstep, within a few feet of him, induced a hasty glance aside. His eye met that of Mrs Wyllys. The lady started, as well as our young mariner, at the sudden recognition; but, recovering her self-possession, she observed, with admirable coolness,—

“You perceive, sir, that we are not to be deterred from an enterprise once undertaken, by any ordinary dangers.”

« I hope you may not have reason, Madam, to repent your courage. »

A short, but painfully thoughtful pause succeeded, on the part of Mrs Wyllys. Casting a look behind her, in order to ascertain that she was not overheard, she drew a step nigher to the youth, and said, in a voice even lower than before,—

« It is not yet too late : Give me but the shadow of a reason for what you have said, and I will wait for another ship. My feelings are foolishly inclined to believe you, young man, though my judgment tells me there is but too much probability that you trifle with our womanish fears. »

« Trifle ! On such a matter I would trifle with none of your sex ; and least of all with you ! »

« This is extraordinary ! For a stranger it is inexplicable ! Have you a fact, or a reason, which I can plead to the friends of my young charge ? »

« You know them already. »

« Then, sir, am I compelled, against my will, to believe your motive is one that you have

some powerful considerations for wishing to conceal, » coolly returned the disappointed and even mortified governess. « For your own sake, I hope it is not unworthy. I thank you for all that is well intended; if you have spoken aught which is otherwise, I forgive it. »

They parted, with the restraint of people who feel that distrust exists between them. Wilder again shrunk behind his cover, maintaining a proud position, and a countenance that was grave to austerity. His situation, however, compelled him to become an auditor of most of what was now said.

The principal speaker, as was meet on such an occasion, was Mrs de Lacey, whose voice was often raised in sage admonitions and professional opinions, blended in a manner that all would admire, though none of her sex, but they who had enjoyed the singular good fortune of sharing in the intimate confidence of a flag-officer, might ever hope to imitate.

« And now, my dearest niece, » concluded the relict of the Rear-Admiral, after exhausting her breath, and her store of wisdom, in numberless exhortations to be careful of her

health, to write often, to repeat the actual words of her private message to her brother the General, to keep below in gales of wind, to be particular in the account of any extraordinary sight she might have the good fortune to behold in the passage, and, in short, in all other matters likely to grow out of such a leave-taking; «and now, my dearest niece, I commit you to the mighty deep, and One far mightier—to Him who made it. Banish from your thoughts all recollections of any thing you may have heard concerning the imperfections of the ‘Royal Caroline;’ for the opinion of the aged seaman, who sailed with the lamented Admiral, assures me they are all founded in mistake.» [«The treacherous villain!» muttered Wilder.] «Who spoke?» said Mrs de Lacey; but, receiving no reply, she continued; «His opinion is also exactly in accordance with my own, on more mature reflection. To be sure, it is a culpable neglect to depend on bobstays and gammonings for the security of the bow-sprit, but still even this is an oversight which, as my old friend has just told me, may be remedied by ‘preventers and

lashings.' I have written a note to the Master, — Gertrude, my dear, be careful ever to call the Master of the ship *Mister* Nichols; for none, but such as bear his Majesty's commission, are entitled to be termed *Captains*; it is an honourable station, and should always be treated with reverence, it being, in fact, next in rank to a flag-officer, — I have written a note to the Master on the subject, and he will see the neglect repaired; and so, my love, God bless you; take the best possible care of yourself; write me by every opportunity; remember my kindest love to your father, and be very minute in your description of the whales.»

The eyes of the worthy and kind-hearted widow were filled with tears as she ended; and there was a touch of nature, in the tremour of her voice, that produced a sympathetic feeling in all who heard her words. The final parting took place under the impression of these kind emotions; and, before another minute, the oars of the boat, which bore the travellers to the ship, were heard in the water.

Wilder listened to the well-known sounds with a feverish interest, that he possibly might have found it difficult to explain even to himself. A light touch on the elbow first drew his attention from the disagreeable subject. Surprised at the circumstance, he faced the intruder, who appeared to be a lad of apparently some fifteen years. A second look was necessary, to tell the abstracted young mariner that he again saw the attendant of the Rover; he who has already been introduced in our pages under the name of Roderick.

«Your pleasure?» he demanded, when his amazement, at being thus interrupted in his meditations, had a little subsided.

«I am directed to put these orders into your own hands,» was the answer.

«Orders!» repeated the young man, with a curling lip. «The authority should be respected which issues its mandates through such a messenger.»

«The authority is one that it has ever proved dangerous to disobey,» gravely returned the boy.

« Indeed! Then will I look into the contents without delay, lest I fall into some fatal negligence. Are you bid to wait an answer? »

On raising his eyes from the note the other had given him, after breaking its seal, the young man found that the messenger had already vanished. Perceiving how useless it would be to pursue so light a form, amid the mazes of lumber that loaded the wharf, and most of the adjacent shore, he opened the letter and read as follows :—

« An accident has disabled the Master of
« the outward-bound ship called the ‘Royal
« Caroline!’ Her consignee is reluctant to in-
« trust her to the officer next in rank; but
« sail she must. I find she has credit for her
« speed. If you have any credentials of *cha-*
« *racter* and *competency*, profit by the occasion,
« and earn the station you are finally destined
« to fill. You have been named to some who
« are interested, and you have been sought
« diligently. If this reach you in season, be
« on the alert, and be decided. Shew no
« surprise at any co-operation you may un-

“ expectedly meet. My agents are more numerous than you had believed. The reason is obvious; gold is yellow, though I am

“ RED. ”

The signature, the matter, and the style of this letter, left Wilder in no doubt as to its author. Casting a glance around him, he sprang into a skiff; and, before the boat of the travellers had reached the ship, that of Wilder had skimmed the water over half the distance between her and the land. As he plied his sculls with vigorous and skilful arms, he soon stood upon her decks. Forcing his way among the crowd of attendants from the shore, that are apt to cumber a departing ship, he reached the part of the vessel where a circle of busy and anxious faces told him he should find those most concerned in her fate. Until now, he had hardly breathed clearly, much less reflected on the character of his sudden enterprise. It was too late, however, to retreat, had he been so disposed, or to abandon his purpose, without incurring the hazard of exciting dangerous suspicions. A single

instant served to recal his thoughts, ere he demanded,—

« Do I see the owner of the 'Caroline?' »

« The ship is consigned to our house, » returned a sedate, deliberate, and shrewd-looking individual, in the attire of a wealthy, but also of a thrifty, trader.

« I have heard that you have need of an experienced officer. »

« Experienced officers are comfortable things to an owner in a vessel of value, » returned the merchant. « I hope the 'Caroline' is not without her portion. »

« But I had heard, one to supply her Commander's place, for a time, was greatly needed? »

« If her Commander were incapable of doing his duty, such a thing might certainly come to pass. Are you seeking a berth? »

« I have come to apply for the vacancy. »

« It would have been wiser, had you first ascertained there existed a vacancy to fill. But you have not come to ask authority, in such a ship as this, without sufficient testimony of your ability and fitness? »

«I hope these documents may prove satisfactory,» said Wilder, placing in his hands a couple of unsealed letters.

During the time the other was reading the certificates, for such they proved to be, his shrewd eye was looking over his spectacles at the subject of their contents, and returning to the paper, in alternate glances, in such a way as to render it very evident that he was endeavouring to assure himself of the fidelity of the words he read, by actual observation.

«Hum! This is certainly very excellent testimony in your favour, young gentleman; and—coming, as it does, from two so respectable and affluent houses as Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed, and Hammer and Hacket—entitled to great credit. A richer and broader-bottomed firm than the former, is not to be found in all his Majesty's colonies; and I have great respect for the latter, though envious people do say that they over-trade a little.»

«Since, then, you esteem them so highly, I shall not be considered hasty in presuming on their friendship.»

« Not at all, not at all, Mr — — a — a » — glancing his eye again into one of the letters ;
« ay — Mr Wilder ; there is never any presumption in a fair offer, in a matter of business. Without offers to sell and offers to buy, our property would never change hands, sir, ha ! ha ! ha ! never change to a profit, you know, young gentleman. »

« I am aware of the truth of what you say, and therefore I beg leave to repeat my offer. »

« All perfectly fair and perfectly reasonable. But you cannot expect us, Mr Wilder, to make a vacancy expressly for you to fill, though it must be admitted that your papers are excellent — as good as the note of Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed themselves — not to make a vacancy expressly » — — —

« I had supposed the Master of the ship so seriously injured » — — —

« Injured, but not seriously, » interrupted the wary consignee, glancing his eye around at sundry shippers, and one or two spectators, who were within ear-shot ; « injured certainly, but not so much as to quit the vessel. No, no, gentlemen ; the good ship ‘ Royal Caroline ’

proceeds on her voyage, as usual, under the care of that old and well-tried mariner, Nicholas Nichols.

« Then, sir, am I sorry to have intruded on your time at so busy a moment, » said Wilder, bowing with a disappointed air, and falling back a step, as if about to withdraw.

« Not so hasty—not so hasty ; bargains are not to be concluded, young man, as you let a sail fall from the yard. It is possible that your services may be of use, though not perhaps in the responsible situation of Master. At what rate do you value the title of ‘ Captain ? ’ »

« I care little for the name, provided the trust and the authority are mine. »

« A very sensible youth ! » muttered the discreet merchant ; « and one who knows how to distinguish between the shadow and the substance ! A gentleman of your good sense and character must know, however, that the reward is always proportioned to the nominal dignity. If I were acting for myself, in this business, the case would be materially changed, but, as an agent, it is a duty to consult the interest of my principal. »

“The reward is of no account,” said Wilder, with an eagerness that might have overreached itself, had not the individual with whom he was bargaining fastened his thoughts on the means of cheapening the other’s services, with a steadiness from which they rarely swerved, when bent on so commendable an object as saving : “I seek for service.”

“Then service you shall have ; nor will you find us niggardly in the operation. You cannot expect an advance, for a run of no more than a month ; nor any perquisites in the way of stowage, since the ship is now full to her hatches ; nor, indeed, any great price in the shape of wages, since we take you chiefly to accommodate so worthy a youth, and to honour the recommendations of so respectable a house as Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed ; but you will find us liberal, excessive liberal. Stay — how know we that you are the person named in the invoi — I should say, recommendation ?

“Does not the fact of possessing the letters establish my character ?”

“It might in peaceable times ; when the realm was not scourged by war. A description of the

person should have accompanied the documents, like a letter of advice with the bill. As we take you at some risk in this matter, you are not to be surprised that the price will be affected by the circumstance. We are liberal; I believe no house in the colonies pays more liberally; but then we have a character for prudence to lose."

"I have already said, sir, that the price shall not interrupt our bargain."

"Good: There is pleasure in transacting business on such liberal and honourable views! And yet I wish a notarial seal, or a description of the person, had accompanied the letters. This is the signature of Robert Tweed; I know it well, and would be glad to see it at the bottom of a promissory note for ten thousand pounds; that is, with a responsible endorser; but the uncertainty is much against your pecuniary interest, young man, since we become, as it were, underwriters that you are the individual named."

"In order that your mind may be at ease on this subject, Mr Bale," said a voice from among the little circle that was listening, with

characteristic interest, to the progress of the bargain, « I can testify, or, should it be necessary, qualify to the person of the gentleman. »

Wilder turned in some haste, and in no little astonishment, to discover the acquaintance whom chance had thrown in so extraordinary, and possibly in so disagreeable a manner, across his path ; and that, too, in a portion of the country where he wished to believe himself an entire stranger. To his utter amazement, he found that the new speaker was no other than the landlord of the ‘ Foul Anchor.’ — Honest Joe stood with a perfectly composed look, and with a face that might readily have been trusted to confront a far more imposing tribunal, awaiting the result of his testimony on the seemingly wavering mind of the consignee.

« Ah ! you have lodged the gentleman for a time, and you can testify that he is a punctual paymaster and a civil inmate. But I want documents fit to be filed with the correspondence of the owners *at home*. »

« I know not what sort of testimony you think fit for such good company, » returned

the unmoved publican, holding up his hand with an air of admirable innocence; « but, if the sworn declaration of a housekeeper is of the sort you need, you are a magistrate, and may begin to say over the words at once. »

« Not I, not I, man. Though a magistrate, the oath is informal, and would not be binding in law. But what do you know of the person in question? »

« That he is as good a seaman, for his years, as any in the colonies. There may be some of more practice and greater experience; I dare say such are to be found; but as to activity, watchfulness, and prudence, it would be hard to find his equal — especially for prudence. »

« You then are quite certain that this person is the individual named in these papers? »

Joram received the certificates with the same admirable coolness he had maintained from the commencement, and prepared to read them with the most scrupulous care. In order to effect this necessary operation, he had to put on his spectacles, (for the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor' was in the wane of life), and Wilder

fancied that he stood, during the process, a notable example of how respectable depravity may become, in appearance, when supported by a reverend air.

« This is all very true, Mr Bale, » continued the publican, removing his glasses, and returning the papers. « They have forgotten to say any thing of the manner in which he saved the 'Lively Nancy,' off Hatteras, and how he run the 'Peggy and Dolly' over the Savannah bar, without a pilot, blowing great guns from the northward and eastward at the time; but I, who followed the water, as you know, in my younger days, have often heard both circumstances mentioned among sea-faring men, and I am a judge of the difficulty. I have an interest in this ship, neighbour Bale, (for though a rich man, and I a poor one, we are nevertheless neighbours) — I say I have an interest in this ship; since she is a vessel that seldom quits Newport without leaving something to jingle in my pocket, or I should not be here to-day, to see her lift her anchor. »

As the publican concluded, he gave audible evidence that his visit had not gone unre-

warded, by raising a music that was no less agreeable to the ears of the thrifty merchant than to his own. The two worthies laughed in an understanding way, and like two men who had found a particular profit in their intercourse with the 'Royal Caroline.' The latter then beckoned Wilder apart, and, after a little further preliminary discourse, the terms of the young mariner's engagement were finally settled. The true Master of the ship was to remain on board, both as a security for the insurance, and in order to preserve her reputation; but it was frankly admitted that his hurt, which was no less than a broken leg, and which the surgeons were then setting, would probably keep him below for a month to come. During the time he was kept from his duty, his functions were to be filled, in effect, by our adventurer. These arrangements occupied another hour of time, and then the consignee left the vessel, perfectly satisfied with the prudent and frugal manner in which he had discharged his duty towards his principal. Before stepping into the boat, however, with a view to be equally careful of his own in-

terests, he took an opportunity to request the publican to make a proper and legal affidavit of all that he knew, 'of his own knowledge,' concerning the officer just engaged. Honest Joram was liberal of his promises; but, as he saw no motive, now that all was so happily effected, for incurring useless risks, he contrived to evade their fulfilment, finding, no doubt, his apology for this breach of faith in the absolute poverty of his information, when the subject came to be duly considered, and construed literally by the terms required.

It is unnecessary to relate the bustle, the reparation of half-forgotten, and consequently neglected business, the duns, good wishes, injunctions to execute commissions in some distant port, and all the confused, and seemingly interminable, duties that crowd themselves into the last ten minutes that precede the sailing of a merchant vessel, more especially if she is fortunate, or rather unfortunate enough to have passengers. A certain class of men quit a vessel, in such a situation, with the reluctance that they would part with any other well established means of profit, creeping down her

sides as lazily as the leech, filled to repletion, rolls from his bloody repast. The common seaman, with an attention divided by the orders of the pilot and the adieus of acquaintances, runs in every direction but the right one, and, perhaps at the only time in his life, seems ignorant of the uses of the ropes he has so long been accustomed to handle. Notwithstanding all these vexatious delays, and customary incumbrances, the 'Royal Caroline' finally got rid of all her visitors but one, and Wilder was enabled to indulge in a pleasure that a seaman alone can appreciate—that of clear decks and an orderly ship's company.

CHAPTER II.

—— “ Good : Speak to the mariners : Fall to’t yarely, or we
run ourselves aground. ”

Tempest.

A good deal of the day had been wasted during the time occupied by the scenes just related. The breeze had come in steady, but far from fresh. So soon, however, as Wilder found himself left without the molestation of idlers from the shore, and the busy interposition of the consignee, he cast his eyes about him, with the intention of immediately submitting the ship to its power. Sending for the pilot, he communicated his determination, and withdrew himself to a part of the deck whence he might take a proper survey of the materials of his new command, and where he might

reflect on the unexpected and extraordinary situation in which he found himself.

The 'Royal Caroline' was not entirely without pretensions to the lofty name she bore. She was a vessel of that happy size in which comfort and convenience had been equally consulted. The letter of the Rover affirmed she had a reputation for her speed; and her young and intelligent Commander saw, with great inward satisfaction, that she was not destitute of the means of enabling him to exhibit all her finest properties. A healthy, active, and skilful crew, justly proportioned spars, little top-hamper, and an excellent trim, with a superabundance of light sails, offered all the advantages his experience could suggest. His eye lighted, as it glanced rapidly over these several particulars of his command, and his lips moved like those of a man who uttered an inward self-gratulation, or who indulged in some vaunt, that propriety suggested should go no farther than his own thoughts.

By this time, the crew, under the orders of the pilot, were assembled at the windlass, and had commenced heaving-in upon the cable.

The labour was of a nature to exhibit their individual powers, as well as their collective force, to the greatest advantage. Their motion was simultaneous, quick, and full of muscle. The cry was clear and cheerful. As if to feel his influence, our adventurer lifted his own voice, amid the song of the mariners, in one of those sudden and inspiring calls with which a sea officer is wont to encourage his people. His utterance was deep, animated, and full of authority. The seamen started like mettled coursers when they first hear the signal, each man casting a glance behind him, as though he would scan the qualities of his new superior. Wilder smiled, like one satisfied with his success; and, turning to pace the quarter-deck, he found himself once more confronted by the calm, considerate, but certainly astonished eye of Mrs Wyllys.

« After the opinions you were pleased to express of this vessel, » said the lady, in a manner of the coldest irony, « I did not expect to find you filling a place of such responsibility here. »

« You probably knew, Madam, » returned the

young mariner, « that a sad accident had happened to her Master? »

« I did ; and I had heard that another officer had been found, temporarily, to supply his place. Still, I should presume, that, on reflection, you will not think it remarkable I am amazed in finding who this person is. »

« Perhaps, Madam, you may have conceived, from our conversations, an unfavourable opinion of my professional skill. But I hope that on this head you will place your mind at ease ; for » ——

« You are doubtless a master of the art ! it would seem, at least, that no trifling danger can deter you from seeking proper opportunities to display this knowledge. Are we to have the pleasure of your company during the whole passage, or do you leave us at the mouth of the port? »

« I am engaged to conduct the ship to the end of her voyage. »

« We may then hope that the danger you either saw or imagined is lessened in your judgment, otherwise you would not be so ready to encounter it in our company. »

« You do me injustice, Madam, » returned Wilder, with warmth, glancing his eye unconsciously towards the grave, but deeply attentive Gertrude, as he spoke ; « there is no danger that I would not cheerfully encounter, to save you, or this young lady, from harm. »

« Even this young lady must be sensible of your chivalry ! » Then, losing the constrained manner with which, until now, she had maintained the discourse, in one more natural, and one far more in consonance with her usually mild and thoughtful mien, Mrs Wyllys continued, « You have a powerful advocate, young man, in the unaccountable interest which I feel in your truth ; an interest that my reason would fain condemn. As the ship must need your services, I will no longer detain you. Opportunities cannot be wanting to enable us to judge both of your inclination and ability to serve us. Gertrude, my love, females are usually considered as incumbrances in a vessel ; more particularly when there is any delicate duty to perform, like this before us. »

Gertrude started, blushed, and proceeded, after her governess, to the opposite side of the

quarter-deck, followed by an expressive look from our adventurer, which seemed to say, he considered her presence any thing else but an incumbrance. As the ladies immediately took a position apart from every body, and one where they were least in the way of working the ship, at the same time that they could command an entire view of all her manœuvres, the disappointed sailor was obliged to cut short a communication which he would gladly have continued until compelled to take the charge of the vessel from the hands of the pilot. By this time, however, the anchor was a-weigh, and the seamen were already actively engaged in the process of making sail. Wilder lent himself, with feverish excitement, to the duty ; and, taking the words from the officer who was issuing the necessary orders, he assumed the immediate superintendence in person.

As sheet after sheet of canvass fell from the yards, and was distended by the complicated mechanism, the interest that a seaman ever takes in his vessel began to gain the ascendancy over all other feelings. By the time every thing was set, from the royals down, and the ship was

cast with her head towards the harbour's mouth, our adventurer had probably forgotten (for the moment only, it is true) that he was a stranger among those he was in so extraordinary a manner selected to command, and how precious a stake was intrusted to his firmness and decision. After every thing was set to advantage, alow and aloft, and the ship was brought close upon the wind, his eye scanned every yard and sail, from the truck to the hull, and concluded by casting a glance along the outer side of the vessel, in order to see that not even the smallest rope was in the water to impede her progress. A small skiff, occupied by a boy, was towing under the lee, and, as the mass of the vessel began to move, it was skipping along the surface of the water, light and buoyant as a feather. Perceiving that it was a boat belonging to the shore, Wilder walked forward, and demanded its owner. A mate pointed to Joram, who at that moment ascended from the interior of the vessel, where he had been settling the balance due from a delinquent, or, what was in his eyes the same thing, a departing debtor.

The sight of this man recalled Wilder to a recollection of all that had occurred that morning, and of the whole delicacy of the task he had undertaken to perform. But the publican, whose ideas appeared always concentrated when occupied on the subject of gain, seemed troubled by no particular emotions at the interview. He approached the young mariner, and, saluting him by the title of 'Captain,' bade him a good voyage, with those customary wishes which seamen express, when about to separate on such an occasion.

« A lucky trip you have made of it, Captain Wilder, » he concluded, « and I hope your passage will be short. You'll not be without a breeze this afternoon ; and, by stretching well over towards Montauk, you'll be able to make such an offing, on the other tack, as to run the coast down in the morning. If I am any judge of the weather, the wind will have more easting in it, than you may happen to find to your fancy. »

« And how long do you think my voyage is likely to last ? » demanded Wilder, dropping his voice so low as to reach no ears but those of the publican.

Joram cast a furtive glance aside ; and, perceiving that they were alone, he suffered an expression of hardened cunning to take possession of a countenance that ordinarily seemed set in dull, physical contentment, as he replied, laying a finger on his nose while speaking,—

« Didn't I tender the consignee a beautiful oath, master Wilder ? »

« You certainly exceeded my expectations with your promptitude, and » ——

« Information ! » added the landlord of the ' Foul Anchor,' perceiving the other a little at a loss for a word ; « yes, I have always been remarkable for the activity of my mind in these small matters ; but, when a man once knows a thing thoroughly, it is a great folly to spend his breath in too many words. »

« It is certainly a great advantage to be so well instructed. I suppose you improve your knowledge to a good account. »

« Ah ! bless me, master Wilder, what would become of us all, in these difficult times, if we did not turn an honest penny in every way that offers ? I have brought up several fine children in credit, and it sha'n't be my fault if I don't

leave them something too, besides my good name. Well, well; they say, 'A nimble sixpence is as good as a lazy shilling;' but give me the man who don't stand shilly-shally when a friend has need of his good word, or a lift from his hand. You always know where to find such a man; as our politicians say, after they have gone through thick and thin in the cause, be it right or be it wrong. »

« Very commendable principles! and such as will surely be the means of exalting you in the world sooner or later! But you forget to answer my question: Will the passage be long, or short? »

« Heaven bless you, master Wilder! Is it for a poor publican, like me, to tell the Master of this noble ship which way the wind will blow next? There is the worthy and notable Commander Nichols, lying in his state-room below, he could do any thing with the vessel; and why am I to expect that a gentleman so well recommended as yourself will do less? I expect to hear that you have made a famous run, and have done credit to the good word I have had occasion to say in your favour. »

Wilder execrated, in his heart, the wary cunning of the rogue with whom he was compelled, for the moment, to be in league; for he saw plainly that a determination not to commit himself a tittle further than he might conceive to be absolutely necessary, was likely to render Joram too circumspect, to answer his own immediate wishes. After hesitating a moment, in order to reflect, he continued hastily,—

« You see that the ship is gathering way too fast to admit of trifling. You know of the letter I received this morning? »

« Bless me, Captain Wilder! Do you take me for a postmaster? How should I know what letters arrive at Newport, and what stop on the main? »

« As timid a villain as he is thorough! » muttered the young mariner. « But this much you may surely say, Am I to be followed immediately? or is it expected that I should detain the ship in the offing, under any pretence that I can devise? »

« Heaven keep you, young gentleman! These are strange questions, to come from one who

is fresh off the sea, to a man that has done no more than look at it from the land, these five-and-twenty years. According to my memory, sir, you will keep the ship about south until you are clear of the islands; and then you must make your calculations according to the wind, in order not to get into the Gulf, where, you know, the stream will be setting you one way, while your orders say, 'Go another.' »

« Luff! mind your luff, sir! » cried the pilot, in a stern voice, to the man at the helm; « luff you can; on no account go to leeward of the slaver! »

Both Wilder and the publican started, as if they found something alarming in the name of the vessel just alluded to; and the former pointed to the skiff, as he said,—

« Unless you wish to go to sea with us, Mr Joram, it is time your boat held its master. »

« Ay, ay, I see you are fairly under way, and I must leave you, however much I like your company, » returned the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor,' bustling over the side, and getting into his skiff in the best manner he could. « Well, boys, a good time to ye; a

plenty of wind, and of the right sort; a safe passage out, and a quick return. Cast off.»

His order was obeyed; the light skiff, no longer impelled by the ship, immediately deviated from its course; and, after making a little circuit, it became stationary, while the mass of the vessel passed on, with the steadiness of an elephant from whose back a butterfly had just taken its flight. Wilder followed the boat with his eyes, for a moment; but his thoughts were recalled by the voice of the pilot, who again called, from the forward part of the ship,—

« Let the light sails lift a little, boy; let her lift; keep every inch you can, or you'll not weather the slaver. Luff, I say, sir; luff.»

« The slaver!» muttered our adventurer, hastening to a part of the ship whence he could command a view of that important, and to him doubly interesting ship; « ay, the slaver! it may be difficult, indeed, to weather upon the slaver!»

He had unconsciously placed himself near Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude; the latter of whom was leaning on the rail of the quarter-deck,

regarding the strange vessel at anchor, with a pleasure far from unnatural to her years and sex.

« You may laugh at me, and call me fickle, and perhaps credulous, dear Mrs Wyllys, » the unsuspecting girl cried, just as Wilder had taken the foregoing position, « but I wish we were well out of this ‘Royal Caroline,’ and that our passage was to be made in yonder beautiful ship ! »

« It is indeed a beautiful ship ! » returned Wyllys ; « but I know not that it would be safer, or more comfortable, than the one we are in. »

« With what symmetry and order the ropes are arranged ! and how like a bird it floats upon the water ! »

« Had you particularised the duck, the comparison would have been exactly nautical, » said the governess, smiling mournfully ; « you shew capabilities, my love, to be one day a seaman’s wife. »

Gertrude blushed a little ; and, turning back her head to answer in the playful vein of her governess, her eye met the riveted look of Wilder, fastened on herself. The colour on

her cheek deepened to a carnation, and she was mute ; the large gipsy hat she wore serving to conceal both her face and the confusion which so deeply suffused it.

« You make no answer, child, as if you reflected seriously on the chances, » continued Mrs Wyllys, whose thoughtful and abstracted mien, however, sufficiently proved she scarcely knew what she uttered.

« The sea is too unstable an element for my taste, » Gertrude coldly answered. « Pray tell me, Mrs Wyllys, is the vessel we are approaching a King's ship? She has a warlike, not to say a threatening exterior. »

« The pilot has twice called her a slaver. »

« A slaver! How deceitful then is all her beauty and symmetry! I will never trust to appearances again, since so lovely an object can be devoted to so vile a purpose. »

« Deceitful indeed! » exclaimed Wilder aloud, under an impulse that he found as irresistible as it was involuntary. « I will take upon myself to say, that a more treacherous vessel does not float the ocean than yonder finely proportioned and admirably equipped » ——

«Slaver,» added Mrs Wyllys, who had time to turn, and to look all her astonishment, before the young man appeared disposed to finish his own sentence.

«Slaver;» he said with emphasis, bowing at the same time, as if he would thank her for the word.

After this interruption, a profound silence occurred. Mrs Wyllys studied the disturbed features of the young man, for a moment, with a countenance that denoted a singular, though a complicated, interest; and then she gravely bent her eyes on the water, deeply occupied with intense, if not painful reflection. The light symmetrical form of Gertrude continued leaning on the rail, it is true, but Wilder was unable to catch another glimpse of her averted and shadowed lineaments. In the mean while, events, that were of a character to withdraw his attention entirely from even so pleasing a study, were hastening to their accomplishment.

The ship had, by this time, passed between the little island and the point whence Home-spun had embarked, and might now be said to

have fairly left the inner harbour. The slaver lay directly in her track, and every man in the vessel was gazing with deep interest, in order to see whether they might yet hope to pass on her weather-beam. The measure was desirable; because a seaman has a pride in keeping on the honourable side of every thing he encounters, but chiefly because, from the position of the stranger, it would be the means of preventing the necessity of tacking before the 'Caroline' should reach a point more advantageous for such a manœuvre. The reader will, however, readily understand that the interest of her new Commander took its rise in far different feelings from those of professional pride, or momentary convenience.

Wilder felt, in every nerve, the probability that a crisis was at hand. It will be remembered that he was profoundly ignorant of the immediate intentions of the Rover. As the fort was not in a state for present service, it would not be difficult for the latter to seize upon his prey in open view of the townsmen, and bear it off, in contempt of their feeble means of defence. The position of the two ships was

favourable to such an enterprise. Unprepared, and unsuspecting, the 'Caroline,' at no times a match for her powerful adversary, must fall an easy victim; nor would there be much reason to apprehend that a single shot from the battery could reach them, before the captor, and his prize, would be at such a distance as to render the blow next to impotent, if not utterly innocuous. The wild and audacious character of such an enterprise was in full accordance with the reputation of the desperate freebooter, on whose caprice, alone, the act now seemed solely to depend.

Under these impressions, and with the prospect of such a speedy termination to his newborn authority, it is not to be considered wonderful that our adventurer awaited the result with an interest far exceeding that of any of those by whom he was surrounded. He walked into the waist of the ship, and endeavoured to read the plan of his secret confederates, by some of those indications that are familiar to a seaman. Not the smallest sign of any intention to depart, or in any manner to change her position, was, however, discoverable in the

pretended slaver. She lay in the same deep, beautiful, but treacherous quiet, as that in which she had reposed throughout the whole of the eventful morning. But a solitary individual could be seen amid the mazes of her rigging, or along the wide reach of all her spars. It was a seaman seated on the extremity of a lower yard, where he appeared to busy himself with one of those repairs that are so constantly required in the gear of a large ship. As the man was placed on the weather side of his own vessel, Wilder instantly conceived the idea that he was thus stationed to cast a grapnel into the rigging of the 'Caroline,' should such a measure become necessary, in order to bring the two ships foul of each other. With a view to prevent so rude an encounter, he instantly determined to defeat the plan. Calling to the pilot, he told him the attempt to pass to windward was of very doubtful success, and reminded him that the safer way would be to go to leeward.

"No fear, no fear, Captain," returned the stubborn conductor of the ship, who, as his authority was so brief, was only the more jealous

of its unrestrained exercise, and who, like an usurper of the throne, felt a jealousy of the more legitimate power which he had temporarily dispossessed; «no fear of me, Captain. I have trolled over this ground oftener than you have crossed the ocean, and I know the name of every rock on the bottom, as well as the town-crier knows the streets of Newport. Let her luff, boy; luff her into the very eye of the wind; luff, you can» ——

«You have the ship shivering as it is, sir,» said Wilder, sternly: «Should you get us foul of the slaver, who is to pay the cost?»

«I am a general underwriter,» returned the opinionated pilot; «my wife shall mend every hole I make in your sails, with a needle no bigger than a hair, and with such a palm as a fairy's thimble!»

«This is fine talking, sir, but you are already losing the ship's way; and, before you have ended your boasts, she will be as fast in irons as a condemned thief. Keep the sails full, boy; keep them a rap full, sir.»

«Ay, ay, keep her a good full,» echoed the pilot, who, as the difficulty of passing to wind-

ward became at each instant more obvious, evidently began to waver in his resolution. "Keep her full-and-by,——I have always told you full-and-by,——I don't know, Captain, seeing that the wind has hauled a little, but we shall have to pass to leeward yet; but you will acknowledge, that, in such case, we shall be obliged to go about."

Now, in point of fact, the wind, though a little lighter than it had been, was, if any thing, a trifle more favourable; nor had Wilder ever, in any manner, denied that the ship would not have to tack, some twenty minutes sooner, by going to leeward of the other vessel, than if she had succeeded in her delicate experiment of passing on the more honourable side; but, as the vulgarest minds are always the most reluctant to confess their blunders, the discomfited pilot was disposed to qualify the concession he found himself compelled to make, by some salvo of the sort, that he might not lessen his reputation for foresight, among his auditors.

"Keep her away at once," cried Wilder, who was beginning to change the tones of remonstrance for those of command; "keep the

ship away, sir, while you have room to do it, or, by the » ——

His lips became motionless; for his eye happened to fall on the pale, speaking, and anxious countenance of Gertrude.

«I believe it must be done, seeing that the wind is hauling. Hard up, boy, and run her under the stern of the ship at anchor. Hold! keep your luff again; eat into the wind to the bone, boy; lift again; let the light sails lift. The slaver has run a warp directly across our track. If there's law in the Plantations, I'll have her Captain before the Courts for this! »

«What means the fellow?» demanded Wilder, jumping hastily on a gun, in order to get a better view.

His mate pointed to the lee-quarter of the other vessel, where, sure enough, a large rope was seen whipping the water, as though in the very process of being extended. The truth instantly flashed on the mind of our young mariner. The Rover lay secretly moored with a spring, with a view to bring his guns more readily to bear upon the battery, should his defence become necessary, and he now profited,

by the circumstance, in order to prevent the trader from passing to leeward. The whole arrangement excited a good deal of surprise, and not a few execrations among the officers of the 'Caroline;' though none but her Commander had the smallest twinkling of the real reason why the kedge had thus been laid, and why a warp was so awkwardly stretched across their path. Of the whole number, the pilot alone saw cause to rejoice in the circumstance. He had, in fact, got the ship in such a situation, as to render it nearly as difficult to proceed in one way as in the other; and he was now furnished with a sufficient justification, should any accident occur, in the course of the exceedingly critical manœuvre, from whose execution there was now no retreat.

«This is an extraordinary liberty to take in the mouth of a harbour,» muttered Wilder, when his eyes put him in possession of the fact just related. «You must shove her by to windward, pilot; there is no remedy.»

«I wash my hands of the consequences, as I call all on board to witness,» returned the

other, with the air of a deeply offended man, though secretly glad of the appearance of being driven to the very measure he was a minute before so obstinately bent on executing. "Law must be called in here, if sticks are snapped, or rigging parted. Luff to a hair, boy; luff her short into the wind, and try a half-board."

The man at the helm obeyed the order. Releasing his hold of its spokes, the wheel made a quick evolution; and the ship, feeling a fresh impulse of the wind, turned her head heavily towards the quarter whence it came, the canvass fluttering with a noise like that produced by a flock of water-fowl just taking wing. But, met by the helm again, she soon fell off as before, powerless from having lost her way, and settling bodily down toward the fancied slaver, impelled by the air, which seemed, however, to have lost much of its force, at the critical instant it was most needed.

The situation of the 'Caroline' was one which a seaman will readily understand. She had forged so far ahead as to lie directly on the weather-beam of the stranger, but too near to enable her to fall-off in the least, without

imminent danger that the vessels would come foul. The wind was inconstant, sometimes blowing in puffs, while at moments there was a perfect lull. As the ship felt the former, her tall masts bent gracefully towards the slaver, as if to make the parting salute; but, relieved from the momentary pressure of the inconstant air, she as often rolled heavily to windward, without advancing a foot. The effect of each change, however, was to bring her still nigher to her dangerous neighbour, until it became evident, to the judgment of the youngest seaman in the vessel, that nothing but a sudden shift of wind could enable her to pass ahead, the more especially as the tide was on the change.

As the inferior officers of the 'Caroline' were not delicate in their commentaries on the dulness which had brought them into so awkward and so mortifying a position, the pilot endeavoured to conceal his own vexation, by the number and vociferousness of his orders. From blustering, he soon passed into confusion, until the men themselves stood idle, not knowing which of the uncertain and contra-

dictory mandates they received ought to be first obeyed. In the mean time, Wilder had folded his arms with an appearance of entire composure, and taken his station near his female passengers. Mrs Wyllys closely studied his eye, with the wish of ascertaining, by its expression, the nature and extent of their danger, if danger there might be, in the approaching collision of two ships in water that was perfectly smooth, and where one was stationary, and the motion of the other scarcely perceptible. The stern, determined look she saw settling about the brow of the young man excited an uneasiness that she would not otherwise have felt, perhaps, under circumstances that, in themselves, bore no very vivid appearance of hazard.

« Have we aught to apprehend, sir? » demanded the governess, endeavouring to conceal from her charge the nature of her own disquietude.

« I told you, Madam, the 'Caroline' would prove an unlucky ship. »

Both females regarded the peculiarly bitter smile with which Wilder made this reply as an evil omen, and Gertrude clung to her com-

panion as to one on whom she had long been accustomed to lean.

« Why do not the mariners of the slaver appear, to assist us—to keep us from coming too nigh? » anxiously exclaimed the latter.

« Why do they not, indeed! but we shall see them, I think, ere long. »

« You speak and look, young man, as if you thought there would be danger in the interview! »

« Keep near to me, » returned Wilder, in tones that were nearly smothered by the manner in which he compressed his lips. « In every event, keep as nigh my person as possible. »

« Haul the spanker-boom to windward, » shouted the pilot; « lower away the boats, and tow the ship's head round—clear away the stream anchor—aft gib-sheet—board main tack, again. »

The astonished men stood like statues, not knowing whither to turn, some calling to the rest to do this or that, and some as loudly countermanding the order; when an authoritative voice was heard calmly to say,—

« Silence in the ship. »

The tones were of that sort which, while they denote the self-possession of the speaker, never fail to inspire the inferior with a portion of the confidence of him who commands. Every face was turned towards the quarter of the vessel whence the sound proceeded, as if each ear was ready to catch the smallest additional mandate. Wilder was standing on the head of the capstan, where he could command a full view on every side of him. With a quick and understanding glance, he had made himself a perfect master of the situation of his ship. His eye was at the instant fixed anxiously on the slaver, as if it would pierce the treacherous calm which still reigned on all about her, in order to know how far his exertions might be permitted to be useful. But it appeared as if the stranger lay like some enchanted vessel on the water, not a human form even appearing about all her complicated machinery, except the seaman already named, who still continued his employment, as though the 'Caroline' was not within a hundred miles of the place where he sat. The lips of Wilder moved: it might be in bitterness; it might be in satisfaction; for, a

smile of the most equivocal nature lighted his features, as he continued, in the same deep, commanding voice as before,—

“Throw all aback — lay every thing flat to the masts, forward and aft. ”

“Ay ! ” echoed the pilot, “lay every thing flat to the masts. ”

“Is there a shove-boat alongside the ship ? ” demanded our adventurer.

The answer, from a dozen voices, was in the affirmative.

“Shew that pilot into her. ”

“This is an unlawful order,” exclaimed the other ; “and I forbid any voice but mine to be obeyed. ”

“*Throw* him in,” sternly repeated Wilder.

Amid the bustle and exertion of bracing round the yards, the resistance of the pilot produced little or no sensation. He was soon raised on the extended arms of the two mates ; and, after exhibiting his limbs in sundry contortions in the air, he was dropped into the boat, with as little ceremony as though he had been a billet of wood. The end of the painter was cast after him ; and then the discom-

fited guide was left, with singular indifference, to his own meditations.

In the mean time, the order of Wilder had been executed. Those vast sheets of canvass which, a moment before, had been either fluttering in the air, or were bellying inward or outward, as they touched or filled, as it is technically called, were now all pressing against their respective masts, impelling the vessel to retrace her mistaken path. The manœuvre required the utmost attention, and the nicest delicacy in its direction. But her young Commander proved himself, in every particular, competent to his task. Here, a sail was lifted; there, another was brought with a flatter surface to the air; now, the lighter canvass was spread; and now it disappeared, like thin vapour suddenly dispelled by the sun. The voice of Wilder, throughout, though calm, was breathing with authority. The ship itself seemed, like an animated being, conscious that her destinies were reposed in different, and more intelligent, hands than before. Obedient to the new impulse they had received, the immense cloud of canvass, with all its tall forest of spars and rigging,

rolled to and fro ; and then, having overcome the state of comparative rest in which it had been lying, the vessel heavily yielded to the pressure, and began to recede.

Throughout the whole of the time necessary to extricate the 'Caroline,' the attention of Wilder was divided between his own ship and his inexplicable neighbour. Not a sound was heard to issue from the imposing and death-like stillness of the latter. Not a single anxious countenance, not even one lurking eye, was to be detected, at any of the numerous outlets by which the inmates of an armed vessel can look abroad upon the deep. The seaman on the yard continued his labour, like a man unconscious of any thing but his own existence. There was, however, a slow, though nearly imperceptible, motion in the ship itself, which was apparently made, like the lazy movement of a slumbering whale, more by listless volition, than through any agency of human hands.

Not the smallest of these changes escaped the keen and understanding examination of Wilder. He saw, that, as his own ship retired, the side of the slaver was gradually exposed to

the 'Caroline.' The muzzles of the threatening guns gaped constantly on his vessel, as the eye of the crouching tiger follows the movement of its prey; and at no time, while nearest, did there exist a single instant that the decks of the latter ship could not have been swept, by a general discharge from the battery of the former. At each successive order issued from his own lips, our adventurer turned his eye, with increasing interest, to ascertain whether he would be permitted to execute it; and never did he feel certain that he was left to the sole management of the 'Caroline' until he found that she had backed from her dangerous proximity to the other; and that, obedient to a new disposition of her sails, she was falling off, before the light air, in a place where he could hold her entirely at command.

Finding that the tide was getting unfavourable, and the wind too light to stem it, the sails were then drawn to her yards in festoons, and an anchor was dropped to the bottom.

CHAPTER III.

« What have here? A man, or a fish? »

The Tempest.

THE 'Caroline' now lay within a cable's length of the supposed slaver. In dismissing the pilot, Wilder had assumed a responsibility from which a seamen usually shrinks; since, in the case of any untoward accident in leaving the port, it would involve a loss of insurance, and his own probable punishment. How far he had been influenced, in taking so decided a step, by a knowledge of his being beyond, or above, the reach of the law, will probably be made manifest in the course of the narrative; the only immediate effect of the measure, was, to draw the whole of his attention, which had before been so much divided between his passengers

and the ship, to the care of the latter. But, so soon as his vessel was secured, for a time at least, and his mind was no longer excited by the expectation of a scene of immediate violence, our adventurer found leisure to return to his former, though (to so thorough a seaman) scarcely more agreeable occupation. The success of his delicate manœuvre had imparted to his countenance a glow of something very like triumph; and his step, as he advanced towards Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, was that of a man who enjoyed the consciousness of having acquitted himself dexterously, in circumstances that required no small exhibition of professional skill. At least, such was the construction the former lady put upon his kindling eye and exulting air; though the latter might, possibly, be disposed to judge of his motives with greater indulgence. Perhaps both were ignorant of the secret reasons of his self-felicitation; and it is possible that a sentiment, of a far more generous nature than either of them could imagine, had a full share of its influence in his present feelings.

Be this as it might, Wilder no sooner saw

that the 'Caroline' was swinging to her anchor, and that his services were of no further immediate use, than he sought an opportunity to renew a conversation which had hitherto been so vague, and so often interrupted. Mrs Wyllys had long been viewing the neighbouring vessel with a steady look; nor did she now turn her gaze from the motionless and silent object, until the young mariner was near her person. She was then the first to speak.

«Yonder vessel must possess an extraordinary, not to say an insensible, crew!» exclaimed the governess, in a tone bordering on astonishment. «If such things were, it would not be difficult to fancy her a spectre-ship.»

«She is truly an admirably proportioned and a beautifully equipped trader!»

«Did my apprehensions deceive me? or were we in actual danger of getting the two vessels entangled?»

«There was certainly some reason for apprehension; but you see we are safe.»

«For which we have to thank your skill. The manner in which you have just extricated us from the late danger, has a direct tendency

to contradict all that you were pleased to foretell of that which is to come.»

«I well know, Madam, that my conduct may bear an unfavourable construction, but» —

«You thought it no harm to laugh at the weakness of three credulous females,» continued Mrs Wyllys, smiling. «Well, you have had your amusement; and now, I hope, you will be more disposed to pity what is said to be a natural infirmity of woman's mind.»

As the governess concluded, she glanced her eye at Gertrude, with an expression that seemed to say, it would be cruel, now, to trifle further with the apprehensions of one so innocent and so young. The look of Wilder followed her own; and when he answered, it was with a sincerity that was well calculated to carry conviction in its tones.

«On the faith which a gentleman owes to all your sex, Madam, what I have already told you I still continue to believe.»

«The gammonings and the top-gallant-masts!»

«No, no,» interrupted the young mariner, slightly laughing, and at the same time colouring a good deal; «perhaps not all of that.

But neither mother, wife, nor sister of mine, should make this passage in the 'Royal Caroline.' »

« Your look, your voice, and your air of good faith, make a strange contradiction to your words, young man ; for, while the former almost tempt me to believe you honest, the latter have not a shade of reason to support them. Perhaps I ought to be ashamed of such a weakness, and yet I will acknowledge, that the mysterious quiet, which seems to have settled for ever on yonder ship, has excited an inexplicable uneasiness, that may in some way be connected with her character.—She is certainly a slaver? »

« She is certainly beautiful! » exclaimed Gertrude.

« Very beautiful! » Wilder gravely rejoined.

« There is a man still seated on one of her yards, who appears to be entranced in his occupation, » continued Mrs Wyllys, leaning her chin thoughtfully on a hand, as she gazed at the object of which she was speaking. « Not once, during the time we were in so much danger of getting the ships entangled, did that

seaman bestow so much as a stolen glance towards us. He resembles the solitary individual in the city of the transformed; for not another mortal is there to keep him company, so far as we may discover. »

« Perhaps his comrades sleep, » said Gertrude.

« Sleep ! Mariners do not sleep in an hour and a day like this ! Tell me, Mr Wilder, (you that are a seaman should know), is it usual for the crew to sleep when a strange vessel is so nigh—near even to touching, I might almost say ? »

« It is not. »

« I thought as much ; for I am not an entire novice in matters of your daring, your hardy, your *noble* profession ! » returned the governess, with deep emphasis. « And, had we gone foul of the slaver, do you think her crew would have maintained their apathy ? »

« I think not, Madam. »

« There is something, in all this assumed tranquillity, which might induce one to suspect the worst of her character. Is it known that any of her crew have had communication with the town, since her arrival ? »

« It is. »

« I have heard that false colours have been seen on the coast, and that ships have been plundered, and their people and passengers maltreated, during the past summer. It is even thought that the famous Rover has tired of his excesses on the Spanish Main, and that a vessel was not long since seen in the Caribbean sea, which was thought to be the cruiser of that desperate pirate ! »

Wilder made no reply. His eyes, which had been fastened steadily, though respectfully, on those of the speaker, fell to the deck, and he appeared to await whatever her further pleasure might choose to utter. The governess mused a moment ; and then, with a change in the expression of her countenance which proved that her suspicion of the truth was too light to continue without further and better confirmation, she added,—

« After all, the occupation of a slaver is bad enough, and unhappily by far too probable, to render it necessary to attribute any worse character to the stranger. I would I knew the motive of your singular assertions, Mr Wilder ? »

« I cannot better explain them, Madam : unless my manner produces its effect, I fail altogether in my intentions, which at least are sincere. »

« Is not the risk lessened by your presence? »

« Lessened, but not removed. »

Until now, Gertrude had rather listened, as if unavoidably, than seemed to make one of the party. But here she turned quickly, and perhaps a little impatiently, to Wilder, and, while her cheeks glowed, she demanded, with a smile that might have brought even a more obdurate man to his confession, —

« Is it forbidden to be more explicit? »

The young Commander hesitated, perhaps as much to dwell upon the ingenuous features of the speaker, as to decide upon his answer. The colour mounted into his own embrowned cheek, and his eye lighted with a gleam of open pleasure ; then, as though suddenly reminded that he was delaying to reply, he said, —

« I am certain, that, in relying on your discretion, I shall be safe. »

« Doubt it not, » returned Mrs Wyllys. « In no event shall you ever be betrayed. »

« Betrayed! For myself, Madam, I have little fear. If you suspect me of personal apprehension, you do me great injustice. »

« We suspect you of nothing unworthy, » said Gertrude hastily, « but — we are very anxious for ourselves. »

« Then will I relieve your uneasiness, though at the expense of » —

A call, from one of the mates to the other, arrested his words for the moment, and drew his attention to the neighbouring ship.

« The slaver's people have just found out that their ship is not made to put in a glass case, to be looked at by women and children, » cried the speaker, in tones loud enough to send his words into the fore-top, where the messmate he addressed was attending to some especial duty.

« Ay, ay, » was the answer; « seeing us in motion, has put him in mind of his next voyage. They keep watch aboard the fellow, like the sun in Greenland; six months on deck, and six months below! »

The witticism produced, as usual, a laugh among the seamen, who continued their re-

marks in a similar vein, but in tones more suited to the deference due to their superiors

The eyes, however, of Wilder had fastened themselves on the other ship. The man so long seated on the end of the main-yard had disappeared, and another sailor was deliberately walking along the opposite quarter of the same spar, steadying himself by the boom, and holding in one hand the end of a rope, which he was apparently about to reeve in the place where it properly belonged. The first glance told Wilder that the latter was Fid, who was so far recovered from his debauch as to tread the giddy height with as much, if not greater, steadiness than he would have rolled along the ground, had his duty called him to terra firma. The countenance of the young man, which, an instant before, had been flushed with excitement, and which was beaming with the pleasure of an opening confidence, changed directly to a look of gloom and reserve. Mrs Wyllys, who had lost no shade of the varying expression of his face, resumed the discourse, with some earnestness, where he had seen fit so abruptly to break it off.

« You would relieve us, » she said, « at the expense of » ———

« Life, Madam ; but not of honour. »

« Gertrude, we can now retire to our cabin, » observed Mrs Wyllys, with an air of cold displeasure, in which disappointment was a good deal mingled with resentment at the trifling of which she believed herself the subject. The eye of Gertrude was no less averted and distant than that of her governess, while the tint that gave lustre to its beam was brighter, if not quite so resentful. As the two moved past the silent Wilder, each dropped a distant salute, and then our adventurer found himself the sole occupant of the quarter-deck. While his crew were busied in coiling ropes, and clearing the decks, their young Commander leaned his head on the taffrail, (that part of the vessel which the good relict of the Rear-Admiral had so strangely confounded with a very different object in the other end of the ship), remaining for many minutes in an attitude of deep abstraction. From this reverie he was at length aroused, by a sound like that produced by the lifting and falling of a light oar into the water.

Believing himself about to be annoyed by visitors from the land, he raised his head, and cast a dissatisfied glance over the vessel's side, to see who was approaching.

A light skiff, such as is commonly used by fishermen in the bays and shallow waters of America, was lying within ten feet of the ship, and in a position where it was necessary to take some little pains in order to observe it. It was occupied by a single man, whose back was towards the vessel, and who was apparently abroad on the ordinary business of the owner of such a boat.

«Are you in search of rudder-fish, my friend, that you hang so closely under my counter?» demanded Wilder. «The bay is said to be full of delicious bass, and other scaly gentlemen, that would far better repay your trouble.»

«He is well paid who gets the bite he baits for,» returned the other, turning his head, and exhibiting the cunning eye and chuckling countenance of old Bob Bunt, as Wilder's recent and treacherous confederate had announced his name to be.

«How now! Dare you trust yourself with

me, in five-fathom water, after the villanous trick you have seen fit » ———

« Hist! noble Captain, hist! » interrupted Bob, holding up a finger, to repress the other's animation, and intimating, by a sign, that their conference must be held in lower tones; « there is no need to call all hands to help us through a little chat. In what way have I fallen to leeward of your favour, Captain? »

« In what way, sirrah! Did you not receive money, to give such a character of this ship to the ladies as (you said yourself) would make them sooner pass the night in a churchyard, than trust foot on board her? »

« Something of the sort passed between us, Captain; but you forgot one half of the conditions, and I overlooked the other; and I need not tell so expert a navigator, that two halves make a whole. No wonder, therefore, that the affair dropt through between us. »

« How! Do you add falsehood to perfidy? What part of my engagement did I neglect? »

« What part! » returned the pretended fisherman, leisurely drawing in a line, which the quick eye of Wilder saw, though abundantly

provided with lead at the end, was destitute of the equally material implement — the hook ;
« What part, Captain ! No less a particular than the second guinea. »

« It was to have been the reward of a service done, and not an earnest, like its fellow, to induce you to undertake the duty. »

« Ah ! you have helped me to the very word I wanted. I fancied it was not in earnest, like the one I got, and so I left the job half finished. »

« Half finished, scoundrel ! you never commenced what you swore so stoutly to perform. »

« Now are you on as wrong a course, my Master, as if you steer'd due east to get to the Pole. I religiously performed one half my undertaking ; and, you will acknowledge, I was only half paid. »

« You would find it difficult to prove that you even did that little. »

« Let us look into the log. I enlisted to walk up the hill as far as the dwelling of the good Admiral's widow, and there to make certain alterations in my sentiments, which it is not necessary to speak of between us. »

« Which you did not make ; but, on the contrary, which you thwarted, by telling an exactly contradictory tale. »

« True. »

« True! knave?—Were justice done you, an acquaintance with a rope's end would be a merited reward. »

« A squall of words!—If your ship steer as wild as your ideas, Captain, you will make a crooked passage to the south. Do you not think it an easier matter, for an old man like me, to tell a few lies, than to climb yonder long and heavy hill? In strict justice, more than half my duty was done when I got into the presence of the believing widow; and then I concluded to refuse the half of the reward that was unpaid, and to take bounty from t'other side. »

« Villain! » exclaimed Wilder, a little blinded by resentment, « even your years shall no longer protect you from punishment. Forward, there! send a crew into the jolly boat, sir, and bring me this old fellow in the skiff on board the ship. Pay no attention to his outcries; I have an account to settle with him, that cannot be balanced without a little noise. »

The mate, to whom this order was addressed, and who had answered the hail, jumped on the rail, where he got sight of the craft he was commanded to chase. In less than a minute he was in the boat, with four men, and pulling round the bows of the ship, in order to get on the side necessary to effect his object. The self-styled Bob Bunt gave one or two strokes with his sculls, and sent the skiff some twenty or thirty fathoms off, where he lay, chuckling like a man who saw only the success of his cunning, without any apparent apprehensions of the consequences. But, the moment the boat appeared in view, he laid himself to the work with vigorous arms, and soon convinced the spectators that his capture was not to be achieved without abundant difficulty.

For some little time, it was doubtful what course the fugitive meant to take ; for he kept whirling and turning in swift and sudden circles, completely confusing and baffling his pursuers, by his skilful and light evolutions. But, soon tiring of this taunting amusement, or perhaps apprehensive of exhausting his own strength, which was powerfully and most dexterously

exerted, it was not long before he darted off in a perfectly straight line, taking the direction of the 'Rover.'

The chase now grew hot and earnest, exciting the clamour and applause of most of the nautical spectators. The result, for a time, seemed doubtful; but, if any thing, the jolly boat, though some distance astern, began to gain, as it gradually overcame the resistance of the water. In a very few minutes, however, the skiff shot under the stern of the other ship, and disappeared, bringing the hull of the vessel in a line with the 'Caroline' and its course. The pursuers were not long in taking the same direction; and then the seamen of the latter ship began, laughingly, to climb the rigging, in order to command a further view, over the intervening object.

Nothing, however, was to be seen beyond but water, and the still more distant island, with its little fort. In a few minutes, the crew of the jolly boat were observed pulling back in their path, returning slowly, like men who were disappointed. All crowded to the side of the ship, in order to hear the termination of the adven-

ture; the noisy assemblage even drawing the two passengers from the cabin to the deck. Instead, however, of meeting the questions of their shipmates with the usual wordy narrative of men of their condition, the crew of the boat wore startled and bewildered looks. Their officer sprang to the deck without speaking, and immediately sought his Commander.

« The skiff was too light for you, Mr Night-head, » Wilder calmly observed, as the other approached, having never moved, himself, from the place where he had been standing during the whole proceeding.

« Too light, sir! Are you acquainted with the man who pulled it? »

« Not particularly well: I only know him for a knave. »

« He should be one, since he is of the family of the devil! »

« I will not take on myself to say he is as bad as you appear to think, though I have little reason to believe he has any honesty to cast into the sea. What has become of him? »

« A question easily asked, but hard to answer. In the first place, though an old and a gray-

headed fellow, he twitched his skiff along as if it floated in air. We were not a minute, or two at the most, behind him; but, when we got on the other side of the slaver, boat and man had vanished!

« He doubled her bows while you were crossing the stern. »

« Did you see him, then? »

« I confess we did not. »

« It could not be, sir; since we pulled far enough ahead to examine on both sides at once; besides, the people of the slaver knew nothing of him. »

« You saw the slayer's people? »

« I should have said her man; for there is seemingly but one hand on board her. »

« And how was he employed? »

« He was seated in the chains, and seem'd to have been asleep. It is a lazy ship, sir; and one that takes more money from her owners, I fancy, than it ever returns! »

« It may be so. Well, let the rogue escape. There is the prospect of a breeze coming in from the sea, Mr Earing; we will get our top-sails to the mast-heads again, and be in readiness

for it. I could like yet to see the sun set in the water. »

The mates and the crew went cheerfully to their task, though many a curious question was asked, by the wondering seamen, of their shipmates who had been in the boat, and many a solemn answer was given, while they were again spreading the canvass, to invite the breeze. Wilder turned, in the mean time, to Mrs Wyllys, who had been an auditor of his short conversation with the mate.

« You perceive, Madam, » he said, « that our voyage does not commence without its omens. »

« When you tell me, inexplicable young man, with the air of singular sincerity you sometimes possess, that we are unwise in trusting to the ocean, I am half inclined to put faith in what you say ; but when you attempt to enforce your advice with the machinery of witchcraft, you only induce me to proceed. »

« Man the windlass ! » cried Wilder, with a look that seemed to tell his companions, If you are so stout of heart, the opportunity to shew your resolution shall not be wanting. « Man the windlass there ! We will try the breeze

again, and work the ship into the offing while there is light. »

The clattering of handspikes preceded the mariners' song. Then the heavy labour, by which the ponderous iron was lifted from the bottom, was again resumed, and, in a few more minutes, the ship was once more released from her hold upon the land.

The wind soon came fresh off the ocean, charged with the saline dampness of the element. As the air fell upon the distended and balanced sails, the ship bowed to the welcome guest; and then, rising gracefully from its low inclination, the breeze was heard singing, through the maze of rigging, the music that is ever grateful to a seaman's ear. The welcome sounds, and the freshness of the peculiar air, gave additional energy to the movements of the men. The anchor was stowed, the ship cast, the lighter sails set, the courses had fallen, and the bows of the 'Caroline' were throwing the spray before her, ere another ten minutes had gone by.

Wilder had now undertaken himself the task of running his vessel between the islands of

Connannicut and Rhode. Fortunately for the heavy responsibility he had assumed, the channel was not difficult, and the wind had veered so far to the east as to give him a favourable opportunity, after making a short stretch to windward, of laying through in a single reach. But this stretch would bring him under the necessity of passing very near the 'Rover,' or of losing no small portion of his 'vantage ground.' He did not hesitate. When the vessel was as nigh the weather shore as his busy lead told him was prudent, the ship was tacked, and her head laid directly towards the still motionless and seemingly unobservant slaver.

The approach of the 'Caroline' was far more propitious than before. The wind was steady, and her crew held her in hand, as a skilful rider governs the action of a fiery and mettled steed. Still the passage was not made without exciting a breathless interest in every soul in the Bristol trader. Each individual had his own secret cause of curiosity. To the seamen, the strange ship began to be the subject of wonder; the governess, and her ward, scarce knew the reasons of their emotions; while Wilder was but

too well instructed in the nature of the hazard that all but himself were running. As before, the man at the wheel was about to indulge his nautical pride, by going to windward; but, although the experiment would now have been attended with but little hazard, he was commanded to proceed differently.

«Pass the slaver's lee-beam, sir,» said Wilder to him, with a gesture of authority; and then the young Captain went himself to lean on the weather-rail, like every other idler on board, to examine the object they were so fast approaching. As the 'Caroline' came boldly up, seeming to bear the breeze before her, the sighing of the wind, as it murmured through the rigging of the stranger, was the only sound that issued from her. Not a single human face, not even a secret and curious eye, was any where to be seen. The passage was of course rapid; and, as the two vessels, for an instant, lay with heads and sterns nearly equal, Wilder thought it was to be made without the slightest notice from the imaginary slaver. But he was mistaken. A light, active form, in the undress attire of a naval officer, sprang upon the taffrail,

and waved a sea-cap in salute. The instant the fair hair was blowing about the countenance of this individual, Wilder recognised the quick, keen eye and features of the Rover.

« Think you the wind will hold here, sir? » shouted the latter, at the top of his voice.

« It has come in fresh enough to be steady, » was the answer.

« A wise mariner would get all his easting in time; to me, there is a smack of West-Indies about it. »

« You believe we shall have it more at south? »

« I do: But a taught bow-line, for the night, will carry you clear. »

By this time the 'Caroline' had swept by, and she was now luffing, across the slaver's bows, into her course again. The figure on the taffrail waved high the sea-cap in adieu, and disappeared.

« Is it possible that such a man can traffic in human beings! » exclaimed Gertrude, when the sounds of both voices had ceased.

Receiving no reply, she turned quickly, to regard her companion. The governess was

— standing like a being entranced, with her eyes looking on vacancy ; for they had not changed their direction since the motion of the vessel had carried her beyond the countenance of the stranger. As Gertrude took her hand, and repeated the question, the recollection of Mrs Wyllys returned. Passing her own hand over her brow, with a bewildered air, she forced a smile, as she said,—

« The meeting of vessels, or the renewal of any maritime experience, never fails to revive my earliest recollections, love. But surely that was an extraordinary being, who has at length shewn himself in the slaver! »

« For a slaver, most extraordinary! »

Wyllys leaned her head on a hand for an instant, and then turned to seek the person of Wilder. The young mariner was standing near, studying the expression of her countenance, with an interest scarcely less remarkable than her own air of thought.

« Tell me, young man, is yonder individual the Commander of the slaver? »

« He is. »

« You know him? »

« We have met. »

« And he is called » ———

« The Master of yon ship. I know no other name. »

« Gertrude, we will seek our cabin. When the land is leaving us, Mr Wilder will have the goodness to let us know. »

The latter bowed his assent, and the ladies then left the deck. The 'Caroline' had now the prospect of getting speedily to sea. In order to effect this object, Wilder had every thing, that would draw, set to the utmost advantage. One hundred times, at least, however, did he turn his head, to steal a look at the vessel he had left behind. She ever lay as when they passed — a regular, beautiful, but motionless object, in the bay. From each of these furtive examinations, our adventurer invariably cast an excited and impatient glance at the sails of his own ship; ordering this to be drawn tighter to the spar beneath, or that to be more distended along its mast.

The effect of so much solicitude, united with so much skill, was to urge the Bristol trader through her element at a rate she had rarely,

if ever, surpassed. It was not long before the land ceased to be seen on her two beams, and then it was only to be traced in the blue islands in their rear, or in a long, dim horizon, to the north and west, where the limits of the vast Continent stretches for countless leagues. The passengers were now summoned to take their parting look at the land, and the officers were seen noting their departures. Just before the day shut in, and ere the islands were entirely sunk into the waves, Wilder ascended to an upper yard, bearing in his hand a glass. His gaze, towards the haven he had left, was long, anxious, and abstracted. But his descent was distinguished by a more quiet eye, and a calmer mien. A smile, like that of success, played about his lips; and he gave his orders clearly, in a cheerful, encouraging voice. They were obeyed as briskly. The elder mariners pointed to the seas, as they cut through them, and affirmed that never had the 'Caroline' made such progress. The mates cast the log, and nodded their approbation, as one announced to the other the unwonted speed of the ship. In short, content and hilarity reigned on board;

for it was deemed that their passage was commenced under such auspices as would lead it to a speedy and a prosperous termination. In the midst of these encouraging omens, the sun dipped into the sea, illuming, as it fell, a wide reach of the chill and gloomy element. Then the shades of the hour began to gather over the vast surface of the illimitable waste.

CHAPTER IV.

« So foul and fair a day I have not seen. »

Macbeth.

THE first watch of the night was marked by no change. Wilder had joined his passengers, cheerful, and with that air of enjoyment which every officer of the sea is more or less wont to exhibit, when he has disengaged his vessel from the dangers of the land, and has fairly launched her on the trackless and fathomless abyss of the ocean. He no longer alluded to the hazards of the passage, but strove, by the thousand nameless assiduities which his station enabled him to manifest, to expel all recollection of what had passed from their minds. Mrs Wyllys lent herself to his evident efforts to remove their apprehensions; and one, ignorant of what

had occurred between them, would have thought the little party, around the evening's repast, was a contented and unsuspecting groupe of travellers, who had commenced their enterprise under the happiest auguries.

Still there was that, in the thoughtful eye and clouded brow of the governess, as at times she turned her bewildered look on our adventurer, which denoted a mind far from being at ease. She listened to the gay and peculiar, because professional, sallies of the young mariner, with smiles that were indulgent, while they were melancholy, as though his youthful spirits, exhibited as they were by touches of a humour that was thoroughly and quaintly nautical, recalled familiar, but sad, images to her fancy. Gertrude had less alloy in her pleasure. Home, with a beloved and indulgent father, were before her; and she felt, while the ship yielded to each fresh impulse of the wind, as if another of those weary miles, which had so long separated them, was already conquered.

During these short but pleasant hours, the adventurer, who had been so oddly called into the command of the Bristol trader, appeared in

a new character. Though his conversation was characterised by the frank manliness of a seaman, it was, nevertheless, tempered by the delicacy of perfect breeding. The beautiful mouth of Gertrude often struggled to conceal the smiles which played around her lips and dimpled her cheeks, like a soft air ruffling the surface of some limpid spring; and once or twice, when the humour of Wilder came unexpectedly across her youthful fancy, she was compelled to yield to the impulses of an irresistible merriment.

One hour of the free intercourse of a ship can do more towards softening the cold exterior in which the world encrusts the best of human feelings, than weeks of the unmeaning ceremonies of the land. He who has not felt this truth, would do well to distrust his own companionable qualities. It would seem that man, when he finds himself in the solitude of the ocean, feels the deepest how great is his dependency on others for happiness. Then it is that he yields to sentiments with which he trifled, in the wantonness of abundance, and is glad to seek relief in the sympathies of his kind. A

community of hazard makes a community of interest, whether person or property composes the stake. Perhaps a metaphysical, and a too literal, reasoner might add, that, as in such situations each one is conscious the condition and fortunes of his neighbour are the mere indexes of his own, they acquire value in his eyes from their affinity to himself. If this conclusion be true, Providence has happily so constituted the best of the species, that the sordid feeling is too latent to be discovered; and least of all was any one of the three, who passed the first hours of the night around the cabin table of the 'Royal Caroline,' to be included in so selfish a class. The nature of the intercourse, which had rendered the first hours of their acquaintance so singularly equivocal, appeared to be forgotten in the freedom of the moment; or, if it were remembered at all, it merely served to give the young seaman additional interest in the eyes of the females, as much by the mystery of the circumstances as by the evident concern he had manifested in their behalf.

The bell had struck eight; and the hoarse

long-drawn call, which summoned the sleepers to the deck, was heard, before either of the party seemed aware of the lateness of the hour.

« It is the middle watch, » said Wilder, smiling as he observed that Gertrude started at the strange sounds, and sat listening, like a timid doe that catches the note of the hunter's horn. « We seamen are not always musical, as you may judge by the strains of the spokesman on this occasion. There are, however, ears in the ship to whom his notes are even more discordant than to your own. »

« You mean the sleepers? » said Mrs Wyllys.

« I mean the watch below. There is nothing so sweet to the foremast mariner as his sleep; for it is the most precarious of all his enjoyments: on the other hand, perhaps, it is the most treacherous companion the Commander knows. »

« And why is the rest of the superior so much less grateful than that of the common man? »

« Because he pillows his head on responsibility. »

« You are young, Mr Wilder, for a trust like this you bear. »

« It is a service which makes us all prematurely old. »

« Then, why not quit it ? » said Gertrude, a little hastily.

« Quit it ! » he replied, gazing at her intently, for an instant, while he suspended his reply. « It would be to me like quitting the air we breathe. »

« Have you so long been devoted to your profession ? » resumed Mrs Wyllys, bending her thoughtful eye, from the ingenuous countenance of her pupil, once more towards the features of him she addressed.

« I have reason to think I was born on the sea. »

« Think ! You surely know your birth-place. »

« We are all of us dependant on the testimony of others, » said Wilder, smiling, « for the account of that important event. My earliest recollections are blended with the sight of the ocean, and I can hardly say that I am a creature of the land at all. »

« You have, at least, been fortunate in those who have had the charge to watch over your education, and your younger days. »

«I have!» he answered, with strong emphasis. Then, after shading his face an instant with his hands, he arose, and added, with a melancholy smile: «And now to my last duty for the twenty-four hours. Have you a disposition to look at the night? So skilful and so stout a sailor should not seek her berth, without passing an opinion on the weather.»

The governess took his offered arm, and, with his aid, ascended the stairs of the cabin in silence, each seemingly finding sufficient employment in meditation. She was followed by the more youthful, and therefore more active Gertrude, who joined them, as they stood together, on the weather side of the quarter-deck.

The night was rather misty than dark. A full and bright moon had arisen; but it pursued its path, through the heavens, behind a body of dusky clouds, that was much too dense for any borrowed rays to penetrate. Here and there, a straggling gleam appeared to find its way through a covering of vapour less dense than the rest, and fell upon the water like the dim illumination of a distant taper. As the

wind was fresh and easterly, the sea seemed to throw upward, from its agitated surface, more light than it received; long lines of white, glittering foam following each other, and lending, at moments, a distinctness to the surface of the waters, that the heavens themselves wanted. The ship was bowed low on its side; and, as it entered each rolling swell of the ocean, a wide crescent of foam was driven ahead, as if the element gambolled along its path. But, though the time was propitious, the wind not absolutely adverse, and the heavens rather gloomy than threatening, an uncertain (and, to a landsman, it might seem an unnatural) light gave to the view a character of the wildest loneliness.

Gertrude shuddered, on reaching the deck, while she murmured an expression of strange delight. Even Mrs Wyllys gazed upon the dark waves, that were heaving and setting in the horizon, around which was shed most of that radiance that seemed so supernatural, with a deep conviction that she was now entirely in the hands of the Being who had created the waters and the land. But Wilder looked upon the scene as one fastens his gaze

on a placid sky. To him the view possessed neither novelty, nor dread, nor charm. Not so, however, with his more youthful and slightly enthusiastic companion. After the first sensations of awe had a little subsided, she exclaimed, in the fullest ardour of admiration,—

« One such sight would repay a month of imprisonment in a ship! You must find deep enjoyment in these scenes, Mr Wilder; you, who have them always at command. »

« Yes, yes; there is pleasure to be found in them, without doubt. I would that the wind had veer'd a point or two! I like not that sky, nor yonder misty horizon, nor this breeze hanging so dead at east. »

« The vessel makes great progress, » returned Mrs Wyllys, calmly, observing that the young man spoke without consciousness, and fearing the effect of his words on the mind of her pupil. « If we are going on our course, there is the appearance of a quick and prosperous passage. »

« True! » exclaimed Wilder, as though he had just become conscious of her presence. « Quite probable, and very true. Mr Earing,

the air is getting too heavy for that duck. Hand all your top-gallant sails, and haul the ship up closer. Should the wind hang here at east-with-southing, we may want what offing we can get.»

The mate replied in the prompt and obedient manner which seamen use to their superiors; and, after scanning the signs of the weather for a moment, he promptly proceeded to see the order executed. While the men were on the yards furling the light canvass, the females walked apart, leaving the young Commander to the uninterrupted discharge of his duty. But Wilder, so far from deeming it necessary to lend his attention to so ordinary a service, the moment after he had spoken, seemed perfectly unconscious that the mandate had issued from his mouth. He stood on the precise spot where the view of the ocean and the heavens had first caught his eye, and his gaze still continued fastened on the aspect of the two elements. His look was always in the direction of the wind, which, though far from a gale, often fell upon the sails of the ship in heavy and sullen puffs. After a long and anxious

examination, the young mariner muttered his thoughts to himself, and commenced pacing the deck with rapid footsteps. Still he would make sudden and short pauses, and again rivet his gaze on the point of the compass whence the blasts came sweeping across the waste of waters; as though he distrusted the weather, and would fain cause his keen glance to penetrate the gloom of night, in order to relieve some painful doubts. At length his step became arrested, in one of those quick turns that he made at each end of his narrow walk. Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude stood nigh, and were enabled to read something of the anxious character of his countenance, as his eye became suddenly fastened on a distant point of the ocean, though in a quarter exactly opposite to that whither his former looks had been directed.

«Do you so much distrust the weather?» asked the governess, when she thought his examination had endured long enough to become ominous of evil.

«One looks not to leeward for the signs of the weather, in a breeze like this,» was the answer.

« What see you, then, to fasten your eye on thus intently? »

Wilder slowly raised his arm, and was about to point with his finger, when the limb suddenly fell again.

« It was delusion! » he muttered, turning quickly on his heel, and pacing the deck still more rapidly than ever.

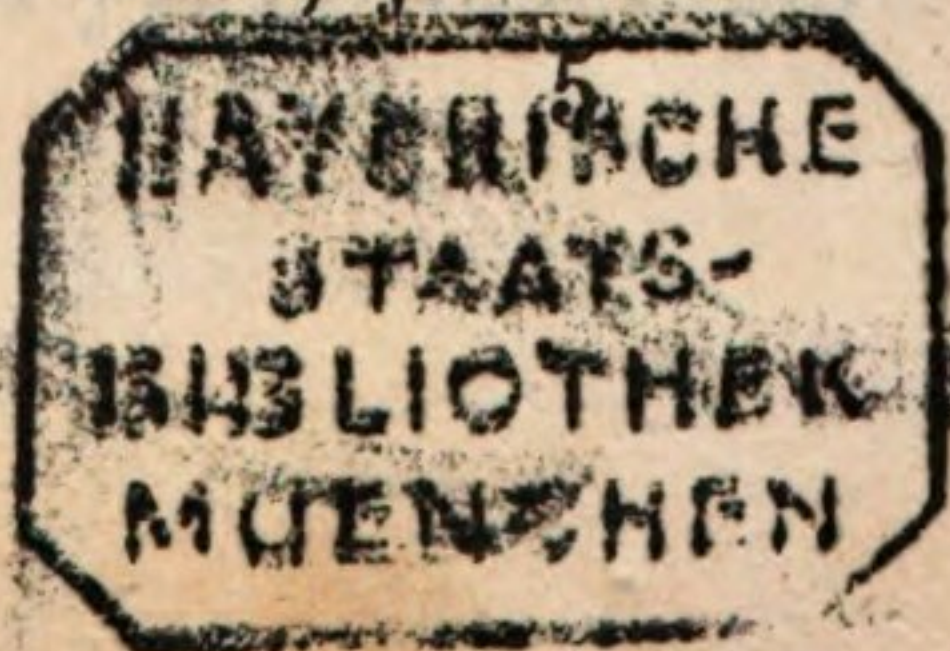
His companions watched the extraordinary, and apparently unconscious, movements of the young Commander, with amazement, and not without a little secret dismay. Their own looks wandered over the expanse of troubled water to leeward, but nowhere could they see more than the tossing element, capped with those ridges of garish foam which served only to make the chilling waste more dreary and imposing.

« We see nothing, » said Gertrude, when Wilder again stopped in his walk, and once more gazed, as before, on the seeming void.

« Look! » he answered, directing their eyes with his finger : « Is there nothing there? »

« Nothing. »

« You look into the sea. Here, just where



the heavens and the waters meet; along that streak of misty light, into which the waves are tossing themselves, like little hillocks on the land. There; now 'tis smooth again, and my eyes did not deceive me. By heavens, it is a ship!»

«Sail, ho!» shouted a voice, from out atop, which sounded in the ears of our adventurer like the croaking of some sinister spirit, sweeping across the deep.

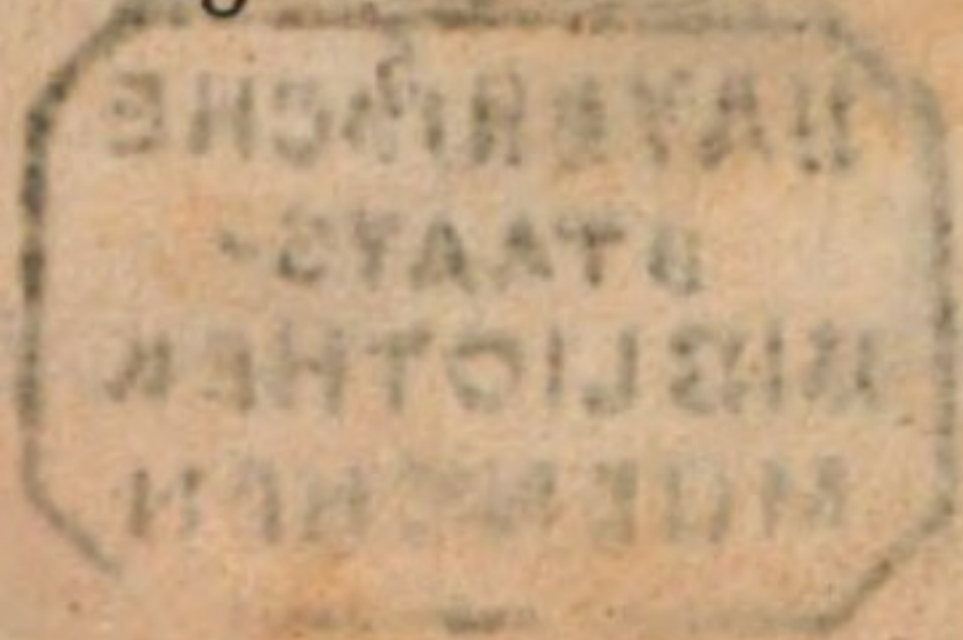
«Whereaway?» was the stern demand.

«Here on our lee-quarter, sir,» returned the seaman, at the top of his voice. «I make her out a ship close-hauled; but, for an hour past, she has looked more like mist than a vessel.»

«Ay, he is right,» muttered Wilder; «and yet 'tis a strange thing that a ship should be just there.»

«And why stranger than that we are here?»

«Why!» said the young man, regarding Mrs Wyllys, who had put this question, with a perfectly unconscious eye. «I say, 'tis strange she should be there. I would she were steering northward.»



“But you give no reason. Are we always to have warnings from you,” she continued, with a smile, “without reasons? Do you deem us so utterly unworthy of a reason? or do you think us incapable of thought on a subject connected with the sea? You have failed to make the essay, and are too quick to decide. Try us this once. We may possibly deceive your expectations.”

Wilder laughed faintly, and bowed, as if he recollected himself. Still he entered into no explanation; but again turned his gaze on the quarter of the ocean where the strange sail was said to be. The females followed his example, but ever with the same want of success. As Gertrude expressed her disappointment aloud, the soft tones of the complainant found their way to the ears of our adventurer.

“You see the streak of dim light,” he said, again pointing across the waste. “The clouds have lifted a little there, but the spray of the sea is floating between us and the opening. Her spars look like the delicate work of a spider, against the sky, and yet you see there

are all the proportions, with the three masts, of a noble ship. »

Aided by these minute directions, Gertrude at length caught a glimpse of the faint object, and soon succeeded in giving the true direction to the look of her governess also. Nothing was visible but the dim outline, not unaptly described by Wilder himself as resembling a spider's web.

« It must be a ship ! » said Mrs Wyllys ; « but at a vast distance. »

« Hum ! Would it were farther. I could wish that vessel any where but there. »

« And why not there ? Have you reason to dread an enemy has been waiting for us in this particular spot ? »

« No : Still I like not her position. Would to God she were going north ! »

« It is some vessel from the port of New York, steering to his Majesty's islands in the Caribbean sea. »

« Not so, » said Wilder, shaking his head ; « no vessel, from under the heights of Never-sink, could gain that offing with a wind like this ! »

« It is then some ship going into the same place, or perhaps bound for one of the bays of the Middle Colonies! »

« Her road would be too plain to be mistaken. See; the stranger is close upon a wind. »

« It may be a trader, or a cruiser coming from one of the places I have named. »

« Neither. The wind has had too much northing, the last two days, for that. »

« It is a vessel that we have overtaken, and which has come out of the waters of Long Island Sound. »

« That, indeed, may we yet hope, » muttered Wilder, in a smothered voice.

The governess, who had put the foregoing questions, in order to extract from the Commander of the 'Caroline' the information he so pertinaciously withheld, had now exhausted all her own knowledge on the subject, and was compelled to await his further pleasure in the matter, or resort to the less equivocal means of direct interrogation. But the busy state of Wilder's thoughts left her no immediate opportunity to pursue the subject. He soon summoned the officer of the watch to

his councils, and they consulted together, apart, for many minutes. The hardy, but far from quick witted, seaman who filled the second station in the ship saw nothing so remarkable in the appearance of a strange sail, in the precise spot where the dim and nearly aerial image of the unknown vessel was still visible; nor did he hesitate to pronounce her some honest trader, bent, like themselves, on her purpose of lawful commerce. It would seem that his Commander thought otherwise, as will appear by the short dialogue that passed between them.

« Is it not extraordinary that she should be just there? » demanded Wilder, after they had, each in turn, made a closer examination of the faint object, by the aid of an excellent night-glass.

« She would be better off, here, » returned the literal seaman, who only had an eye for the nautical situation of the stranger; « and we should be none the worse for being a dozen leagues more to the eastward, ourselves. If the wind holds here at east-by-south-half-south, we shall have need of all that offing. I

got jammed once between Hatteras and the Gulf » —

« But, do you not perceive that she is where no vessel could or ought to be, unless she has run exactly the same course with ourselves? » interrupted Wilder. « Nothing, from any harbour south of New York, could have such northing, as the wind has been ; while nothing, from the Colony of York, would stand on this tack, if bound east ; or would be here, if going southward.

The plain-going ideas of the honest mate were open to a reasoning which the reader may find a little obscure ; for his mind contained a sort of chart of the ocean, to which he could at any time refer, with a proper discrimination between the various winds, and all the different points of the compass. When properly directed, he was not slow to see, as a mariner, the probable justice of his young Commander's inferences ; and then wonder, in its turn, began to take possession of his more obtuse faculties.

« It is downright unnatural, truly, that the fellow should be there ! » he replied, shaking

his head, but meaning no more than that it was entirely out of the order of nautical propriety; « I see the philosophy of what you say, Captain Wilder; and little do I know how to explain it. It is a ship, to a mortal certainty! »

« Of that there is no doubt. But a ship most strangely placed! »

« I doubled the Good-Hope in the year '46, » continued the other, « and saw a vessel lying, as it might be, here, on our weather-bow—which is just opposite to this fellow, since he is on our lee-quarter—but there I saw a ship standing for an hour across our fore-foot, and yet, though we set the azimuth, not a degree did he budge, starboard or larboard, during all that time, which, as it was heavy weather, was, to say the least, something out of the common order. »

« It was remarkable! » returned Wilder, with an air so vacant, as to prove that he rather communed with himself than attended to his companion.

« There are mariners who say that the flying Dutchman cruises off that Cape, and that he often gets on the weather side of a stranger,

and bears down upon him, like a ship about to lay him aboard. Many is the King's cruiser, as they say, that has turned her hands up from a sweet sleep, when the look-outs have seen a double decker coming down in the night, with ports up, and batteries lighted; but then this can't be any such craft as the Dutchman, since she is, at the most, no more than a large sloop of war, if a cruiser at all. »

« No, no, » said Wilder, « this can never be the Dutchman. »

« Yon vessel shews no lights; and, for that matter, she has such a misty look, that one might well question its being a ship at all. Then, again, the Dutchman is always seen to windward, and the strange sail we have here lies broad upon our lee-quarter! »

« It is no Dutchman, » said Wilder, drawing a long breath, like a man awaking from a trance. « Main-topmast-cross-trees, there! »

The man who was stationed aloft answered to this hail in the customary manner, the short conversation that succeeded being necessarily maintained in shouts, rather than in speeches.

« How long have you seen the stranger ? »
was the first demand of Wilder.

« I have just come aloft, sir ; but the man I relieved tells me more than an hour. »

« And has the man you relieved come down ?
or what is that I see sitting on the lee side of
the mast-head ? »

« 'Tis Bob Brace, sir ; who says he cannot
sleep, and so he stays upon the yard to keep
me company. »

« Send the man down. I would speak to him. »

While the wakeful seaman was descending
the rigging, the two officers continued silent,
each seeming to find sufficient occupation in
musing on what had already passed.

« And why are you not in your hammock ? »
said Wilder, a little sternly, to the man who,
in obedience to his order, had descended to
the quarter-deck.

« I am not sleep-bound, your Honour, and
therefore I had the mind to pass another hour
aloft. »

« And why are you, who have two night-
watches to keep already, so willing to enlist in
a third ? »

« To own the truth, sir, my mind has been a little misgiving about this passage, since the moment we lifted our anchor. »

Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, who were auditors, insensibly drew nigher, to listen, with a species of interest which betrayed itself by the thrilling of nerves, and an accelerated movement of the pulse.

« And you have your doubts, sir! » exclaimed the Captain, in a tone of slight contempt. « Pray, may I ask what you have seen, on board here, to make you distrust the ship. »

« No harm in asking, your Honour, » returned the seaman, crushing the hat he held between two hands that had a gripe like a couple of vices, « and so I hope there is none in answering. I pulled an oar in the boat after the old man this morning, and I cannot say I like the manner in which he got from the chase. Then, there is something in the ship to leeward that comes athwart my fancy like a drag, and I confess, your Honour, that I should make but little headway in a nap, though I should try the swing of a hammock. »

« How long is it since you made the ship to leeward? » gravely demanded Wilder.

« I will not swear that a real living ship has been made out at all, sir. Something I did see, just before the bell struck seven, and there it is, just as clear and just as dim, to be seen now by them that have good eyes. »

« And how did she bear when you first saw her? »

« Two or three points more toward the beam than it is now. »

« Then we are passing her! » exclaimed Wilder, with a pleasure too evident to be concealed.

« No, your Honour, no. You forget, sir, the ship has come closer to the wind since the middle watch was set. »

« True, » returned his young Commander, in a tone of disappointment; « true, very true. And her bearing has not changed since you first made her? »

« Not by compass, sir. It is a quick boat that, or it would never hold such way with the 'Royal Caroline,' and that too upon a stiffened bow-line, which every body knows is the real play of this ship. »

“Go, get you to your hammock. In the morning we may have a better look at the fellow.”

“And—you hear me, sir,” added the attentive mate, “do not keep the men’s eyes open below, with a tale as long as the short cable, but take your own natural rest, and leave all others, that have clear consciences, to do the same.”

“Mr Earing,” said Wilder, as the seaman reluctantly proceeded towards his place of rest, “we will bring the ship upon the other tack, and get more easting, while the land is so far from us. This course will be setting us upon Hatteras. Besides” —

“Yes, sir,” the mate replied, observing his superior to hesitate, “as you were saying,—besides, no one can foretell the length of a gale, nor the real quarter it may come from.”

“Precisely. No one can answer for the weather. The men are scarcely in their hammocks; turn them up at once, sir, before their eyes are heavy, and we will bring the ship’s head the other way.”

The mate instantly sounded the well-known

cry, which summoned the watch below to the assistance of their shipmates on the deck. Little delay occurred, and not a word was uttered, but the short, authoritative mandates which Wilder saw fit to deliver from his own lips. No longer pressed up against the wind, the ship, obedient to her helm, gracefully began to incline her head from the waves, and to bring the wind abeam. Then, instead of breasting and mounting the endless hillocks, like a being that toiled heavily along its path, she fell into the trough of the sea, from which she issued like a courser, who, having conquered an ascent, shoots along the track with redoubled velocity. For an instant the wind appeared to have lulled, though the wide ridge of foam, which rolled along on each side the vessel's bows, sufficiently proclaimed that she was skimming lightly before it. In another moment, the tall spars began to incline again to the west, and the vessel came swooping up to the wind, until her plunges and shocks against the seas were renewed as violently as before. When every yard and sheet were properly trimmed to meet the new position of the

vessel, Wilder turned anxiously to get a glimpse of the stranger. A minute was lost in ascertaining the precise spot where he ought to appear; for, in such a chaos of water, and with no guide but the judgment, the eye was apt to deceive itself, by referring to the nearer and more familiar objects by which the spectator was surrounded.

« The stranger has vanished ! » said Earing, with a voice in whose tones mental relief and distrust were both, at the same moment, oddly manifesting themselves.

« He should be on this quarter; but I confess I see him not ! »

« Ay, ay, sir; this is the way that the midnight cruiser off the Hope is said to come and go. There are men who have seen that vessel shut in by a fog, in as fine a star-light night as was ever met in a southern latitude. But then this cannot be the Dutchman, since it is so many long leagues from the pitch of the Cape to the coast of North-America.

« Here he lies; and, by heaven! he has already gone about ! » cried Wilder.

The truth of what our young adventurer

had just affirmed was indeed now sufficiently evident to the eye of any seaman. The same diminutive and misty tracery, as before, was to be seen on the light back-ground of the threatening horizon, looking not unlike the faintest shadows cast upon some brighter surface by the deception of the phantasmagoria. But to the mariners, who so well knew how to distinguish between the different lines of her masts, it was very evident that her course had been suddenly and dexterously changed, and that she was now steering no longer to the south and west, but, like themselves, holding her way towards the north-east. The fact appeared to make a sensible impression on them all; though probably, had their reasons been sifted, they would have been found to be entirely different.

« That ship has truly tacked! » Earing exclaimed, after a long, meditative pause, and with a voice in which distrust, or rather awe, was beginning to get the ascendancy. « Long as I have followed the sea, have I never before seen a vessel tack against such a head-beating sea. He must have been all shaking in the wind,

when we gave him the last look, or we should not have lost sight of him. »

« A lively and quick-working vessel might do it, » said Wilder; « especially if strong handed. »

« Ay, the hand of Beelzebub is always strong; and a light job would he make of it, in forcing even a dull craft to sail. »

« Mr Earing, » interrupted Wilder, « we will pack upon the 'Caroline,' and try our sailing with this taunting stranger. Get the main tack aboard, and set the top-gallant-sail. »

The slow-minded mate would have remonstrated against the order, had he dared; but there was that, in the calm, subdued, but deep tones of his young Commander, which admonished him of the hazard. He was not wrong, however, in considering the duty he was now to perform as one not without some risk. The ship was already moving under quite as much canvass as he deemed it prudent to shew at such an hour, and with so many threatening symptoms of heavier weather hanging about the horizon. The necessary orders were, however, repeated as promptly as they had been given. The seamen had already

begun to consider the stranger, and to converse among themselves concerning his appearance and situation; and they obeyed with an alacrity that might perhaps have been traced to a secret but common wish to escape from his vicinity. The sails were successively and speedily set; and then each man folded his arms, and stood gazing steadily and intently at the shadowy object to leeward, in order to witness the effect of the change.

The 'Royal Caroline' seemed, like her crew, sensible of the necessity of increasing her speed. As she felt the pressure of the broad sheets of canvass that had just been distended, the ship bowed lower, and appeared to recline on the bed of water which rose under her lee nearly to the scuppers. On the other side, the dark planks, and polished copper, lay bare for many feet, though often washed by the waves that came sweeping along her length, green and angrily, still capp'd, as usual, with crests of lucid foam. The shocks, as the vessel tilted against the billows, were becoming every moment more severe; and, from each encounter, a bright cloud of spray arose, which

either fell glittering on the deck, or drove, in brilliant mist, across the rolling water, far to leeward.

Wilder long watched the ship, with an excited mien, but with all the intelligence of a seaman. Once or twice, when she trembled, and appeared to stop, in her violent encounter with a wave, as suddenly as though she had struck a rock, his lips severed, and he was about to give the order to reduce the sail; but a glance at the misty looking image on the western horizon seemed ever to cause his mind to change its purpose. Like a desperate adventurer, who had cast his fortunes on some hazardous experiment, he appeared to await the issue with a resolution that was as haughty as it was unconquerable.

« That top-mast is bending like a whip, » muttered the careful Earing, at his elbow.

« Let it go; we have spare spars to put in its place, » was the answer.

« I have always found the 'Caroline' leaky after she has been strained by driving her against the sea. »

« We have our pumps. »

« True, sir; but, in my poor judgment, it is idle to think of outsailing a craft that the devil commands, if he does not altogether handle it. »

« One will never know that, Mr Earing, till he tries. »

« We gave the Dutchman a chance of that sort; and, I must say, we not only had the most canvass spread, but much the best of the wind: And what good did it all do? there he lay, under his three topsails, driver, and jib; and we, with studding sails alow and aloft, couldn't alter his bearing a foot. »

« The Dutchman is never seen in a northern latitude. »

« Well, I cannot say he is, » returned Earing, in a sort of compelled resignation; « but he who has put that flyer off the Cape may have found the cruise so profitable, as to wish to send another ship into these seas. »

Wilder made no reply. He had either humoured the superstitious apprehension of his mate enough, or his mind was too intent on its principal object, to dwell longer on a foreign subject.

Notwithstanding the seas that met her advance, in such quick succession as greatly to retard her progress, the Bristol trader had soon toiled her way through a league of the troubled element. At every plunge she took, the bow divided a mass of water, that appeared, at each instant, to become more vast and more violent in its rushing; and more than once the struggling hull was nearly buried forward, in some wave which it had equal difficulty in mounting or penetrating.

The mariners narrowly watched the smallest movements of their vessel. Not a man left her deck, for hours. The superstitious awe, which had taken such deep hold of the untutored faculties of the chief mate, had not been slow to extend its influence to the meanest of her crew. Even the accident which had befallen their former Commander, and the sudden and mysterious manner in which the young officer, who now trod the quarter-deck, so singularly firm and calm, under circumstances deemed so imposing, had their influence in heightening the wild impression. The impunity with which the 'Caroline' bore such a press of canvass,

under the circumstances in which she was placed, added to their kindling admiration ; and, ere Wilder had determined, in his own mind, on the powers of his ship, in comparison with those of the vessel that so strangely hung in the horizon, he was himself becoming the subject of unnatural and revolting suspicions to his own crew.

CHAPTER V.

—— « I' the name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye shew? »

Macbeth.

THE division of employment that is found in Europe, and which brings, in its train, a peculiar and corresponding limitation of ideas, has never yet existed in our country. If our artisans have, in consequence, been less perfect in their several handicrafts, they have ever been remarkable for intelligence of a more general character. Superstition is, however, a quality that seems indigenous to the ocean. Few common mariners are exempt from its influence, in a greater or less degree; though it is found to exist, among the seamen of different people, in forms that are tempered by their respective national habits and peculiar opinions. The

sailor of the Baltic has his secret rites, and his manner of propitiating the gods of the wind; the Mediterranean mariner tears his hair, and kneels before the shrine of some impotent saint, when his own hand might better do the service he implores; while the more skilful Englishman sees the spirits of the dead in the storm, and hears the cries of a lost messmate in the gusts that sweep the waste he navigates. Even the better instructed and still more reasoning American has not been able to shake entirely off the secret influence of a sentiment that seems the concomitant of his condition.

There is a majesty, in the might of the great deep, that has a tendency to keep open the avenues of that dependant credulity which more or less besets the mind of every man, however he may have fortified his intellect by thought. With the firmament above him, and wandering on an interminable waste of water, the less gifted seaman is tempted, at every step of his pilgrimage, to seek the relief of some propitious omen. The few which are supported by scientific causes give support to the many that have their origin only in his own excited

and doubting temperament. The gambols of the dolphin, the earnest and busy passage of the porpoise, the ponderous sporting of the unwieldy whale, and the screams of the marine birds, have all, like the signs of the ancient soothsayers, their attendant consequences of good or evil. The confusion between things which are explicable, and things which are not, gradually brings the mind of the mariner to a state in which any exciting and unnatural sentiment is welcome, if it be for no other reason than that, like the vast element on which he passes his life, it bears the impression of what is thought a supernatural, because it is an incomprehensible, power.

The crew of the 'Royal Caroline' had not even the advantage of being natives of a land where necessity and habit have united to bring every man's faculties into exercise, to a certain extent at least. They were all from that distant island that has been, and still continues to be, the hive of nations, which are probably fated to carry her name to a time when the site of her fallen power shall be sought as a curiosity, like the remains of a city in a desert.

The whole events of that day of which we are now writing had a tendency to arouse the latent superstition of these men. It has already been said, that the calamity which had befallen their former Commander, and the manner in which a stranger had succeeded to his authority, had their influence in increasing their disposition to doubt. The sail to leeward appeared most inopportunately for the character of our adventurer, who had not yet enjoyed a fitting opportunity to secure the confidence of his inferiors, before such untoward circumstances occurred as threatened to deprive him of it for ever.

There has existed but one occasion for introducing to the reader the mate who filled the station in the ship next to that of Earing. He was called Nighthead; a name that was, in some measure, indicative of a certain misty obscurity that beset his superior member. The qualities of his mind may be appreciated by the few reflexions he saw fit to make on the escape of the old mariner whom Wilder had intended to visit with a portion of his indignation. This individual, as he was but one degree

removed from the common men in situation, so was he every way qualified to maintain that association with the crew which was, in some measure, necessary between them. His influence among them was commensurate to his opportunities of intercourse, and his sentiments were very generally received with a portion of that deference which is thought to be due to the opinions of an oracle.

After the ship had been worn, and during the time that Wilder, with a view to lose sight of his unwelcome neighbour, was endeavouring to urge her through the seas in the manner already described, this stubborn and mystified tar remained in the waist of the vessel, surrounded by a few of the older and more experienced seamen, holding converse on the remarkable appearance of the phantom to leeward, and of the extraordinary manner in which their unknown officer saw fit to attest the enduring qualities of their own vessel. We shall commence our relation of the dialogue at a point where Nighthead saw fit to discontinue his distant inuendos, in order to deal more directly with the subject he had under discussion.

« I have heard it said, by older sea-faring men than any in this ship, » he continued, « that the devil has been known to send one of his mates aboard a lawful trader, to lead her astray among shoals and quicksands, in order that he might make a wreck, and get his share of the salvage, among the souls of the people. What man can say who gets into the cabin, when an unknown name stands first in the shipping list of a vessel? »

« The stranger is shut in by a cloud! » exclaimed one of the mariners, who, while he listened to the philosophy of his officer, still kept an eye riveted on the mysterious object to leeward.

« Ay, ay; it would occasion no surprise to see that craft steering into the moon! Luck is like a fly-bock and its yard: when one goes up, the other comes down. They say the red-coats ashore have had their turn of fortune, and it is time we honest seamen look out for our squalls. I have doubled the Horn, brothers, in a King's ship, and I have seen the bright cloud that never sets, and have held a living corposant in my own hand: But these are things

which any man may look on, who will go upon a yard in a gale, or ship aboard a Southseaman: Still, I pronounce it uncommon for a vessel to see her shadow in the haze, as we have ours at this moment; for there it comes again! — hereaway, between the after-shroud and the backstay — or for a trader to carry sail in a fashion that would make every knee in a bomb-ketch work like a tooth-brush fiddling across a passenger's mouth, after he had had a smart bout with the sea sickness. »

« And yet the lad holds the ship in hand, » said the oldest of all the seamen, who kept his gaze fastened on the proceedings of Wilder; « he is driving her through it in a mad manner, I will allow; but yet, so far, he has not parted a yarn. »

« Yarns! » repeated the mate, in a tone of strong contempt; « what signify yarns, when the whole cable is to snap, and in such a fashion as to leave no hope for the anchor, except in a buoy rope? Hark ye, old Bill; the devil never finishes his jobs by halves: What is to happen will happen bodily; and no easing-off, as if you were lowering the

Captain's lady into a boat, and he on deck to see fair play. »

« Mr Nighthead knows how to keep a ship's reckoning in all weathers! » said another, whose manner sufficiently announced the dependance he himself placed on the capacity of the second mate.

« And no credit to me for the same. I have seen all services, and handled every rig, from a lugger to a double-decker! Few men can say more in their own favour than myself; for the little I know has been got by much hardship, and small schooling. But what matters information, or even seamanship, against witchcraft, or the workings of one whom I don't choose to name, seeing that there is no use in offending any gentleman unnecessarily? I say, brothers, that this ship is packed upon in a fashion that no prudent seaman ought to, or would, allow. »

A general murmur announced that most, if not all, of his hearers accorded in his opinion.

« Let us examine calmly and reasonably, and in a manner becoming enlightened Englishmen, into the whole state of the case, » the mate

continued, casting an eye obliquely over his shoulder, perhaps to make sure that the individual, of whose displeasure he stood in such salutary awe, was not actually at his elbow. "We are all of us, to a man, native-born islanders, without a drop of foreign blood among us; not so much as a Scotchman or an Irishman in the ship. Let us therefore look into the philosophy of this affair, with that sort of judgment which becomes our breeding. In the first place, here is honest Nicholas Nichols slips from this here water-cask, and breaks me a leg! Now, brothers, I've known men to fall from tops and yards, and lighter damage done. But what matters it, to a certain person, how far he throws his man, since he has only to lift a finger to get us all hanged? Then, comes me aboard here a stranger, with a look of the colonies about him, and none of your plain-dealing, out-and-out, smooth English faces, such as a man can cover with the flat of his hand." —

"The lad is well-enough to the eye," interrupted the old mariner.

"Ay, therein lies the whole deviltry of this matter! He is good-looking, I grant ye; but

it is not such good-looking as an Englishman loves. There is a meaning about him that I don't like ; for I never likes too much meaning in a man's countenance, seeing that it is not always easy to understand what he would be doing. Then, this stranger gets to be Master of the ship, or, what is the same thing, next to Master ; while he who should be on deck giving his orders, in a time like this, is lying in his berth unable to tack himself, much less to put the vessel about ; and yet no man can say how the thing came to pass. »

« He drove a bargain with the consignee for the station, and right glad did the cunning merchant seem to get so tight a youth to take charge of the ' Caroline. ' »

« Ah ! a merchant is, like the rest of us, made of nothing better than clay ; and, what is worse, it is seldom that, in putting him together, he is dampened with salt water. Many is the trader that has douzed his spectacles, and shut his account-books, to step aside to over-reach his neighbour, and then come back to find that he has over-reached himself. Mr Bale, no doubt, thought he was doing the clever

thing for the owners, when he shipped this Mr Wilder; but then, perhaps, he did not know that the vessel was sold to ———— It becomes a plain-going seaman to have a respect for all he sails under; so I will not, unnecessarily, name the person who, I believe, has got, whether he came by it in a fair purchase or not, no small right in this vessel. »

« I have never seen a ship got out of irons more handsomely than he handled the 'Caroline' this very morning. »

Nighthead now indulged in a low, but what to his listeners appeared to be an exceedingly meaning, laugh.

« When a ship has a certain sort of Captain, one is not to be surprised at any thing, » he answered, the instant his significant merriment had ceased. « For my own part, I shipped to go from Bristol to the Carolinas and Jamaica, touching at Newport out and home; and I will say, boldly, I have no wish to go anywhere else. As to backing the 'Caroline' from her awkward berth alongside the slaver, why, it was well done; most too well for so young a mariner. Had I done the thing myself, it could not have

been much better. But what think you, brothers, of the old man in the skiff? There was a chase, and an escape, such as few old sea-dogs have the fortune to behold! I have heard of a smuggler that was chased a hundred times by his Majesty's cutters, in the chops of the Channel, and which always had a fog handy to run into, but out of which no man could truly say he ever saw her come again! This skiff may have plied between the land and that Guernseyman, for any thing I know to the contrary; but it is not a boat I wish to pull a scull in.»

« That *was* a remarkable flight! » exclaimed the elder seaman, whose faith in the character of our adventurer began to give way gradually, before such an accumulation of testimony.

« I call it so; though other men may possibly know better than I, who have only followed the water five-and-thirty years. Then, here is the sea getting up in an unaccountable manner! and look at these rags of clouds, which darken the heavens! and yet there is light enough, coming from the ocean, for a good scholar to read by!

« I've often seen the weather as it is now. »

« Ay, who has not? It is seldom that any man, let him come from what part he will, makes his first voyage as Captain. Let who will be out to-night upon the water, I'll engage he has been there before. I have seen worse looking skies, and even worse looking water, than this; but I never knew any good come of either. The night I was wreck'd in the bay of » ——

« In the waist there! » cried the calm, authoritative tones of Wilder.

Had a warning voice arisen from the turbulent and rushing ocean itself, it would not have sounded more alarming, in the startled ears of the conscious seamen, than this sudden hail. Their young Commander found it necessary to repeat it, before even Nighthead, the proper and official spokesman, could muster resolution to answer.

« Get the fore-top-gallant-sail on the ship, sir, » continued Wilder, when the customary reply let him know that he had been heard.

The mate and his companions regarded each other, for a moment, in dull admiration; and

many a melancholy shake of the head was exchanged, before one of the party threw himself into the weather-rigging, and proceeded aloft, with a doubting mind, in order to loosen the sail in question.

There was certainly enough, in the desperate manner with which Wilder pressed the canvass on the vessel, to excite distrust, either of his intentions or judgment, in the opinions of men less influenced by superstition than those it was now his lot to command. It had long been apparent to Earing, and his more ignorant, and consequently more obstinate, brother officer, that their young superior had the same desire to escape from the spectral-looking ship, which so strangely followed their movements, as they had themselves. They only differed in the mode; but this difference was so very material, that the two mates consulted together apart, and then Earing, something stimulated by the hardy opinions of his coadjutor, approached his Commander, with the determination of delivering the results of their united judgments, with that sort of directness which he thought the occasion now demanded. But there was that

in the steady eye and imposing mien of Wilder, that caused him to touch on the dangerous subject with a discretion and circumlocution that were a little remarkable for the individual. He stood watching the effect of the sail recently spread, for several minutes, before he even presumed to open his mouth. But a terrible encounter, between the vessel and a wave that lifted its angry crest apparently some dozen feet above the approaching bows, gave him courage to proceed, by admonishing him afresh of the danger of continuing silent.

« I do not see that we drop the stranger, though the ship is wallowing through the water so heavily, » he commenced, determined to be as circumspect as possible in his advances.

Wilder bent another of his frequent glances on the misty object in the horizon, and then turned his frowning eye towards the point whence the wind proceeded, as if he would defy its heaviest blasts ; he, however, made no answer.

« We have ever found the crew discontented at the pumps, sir, » resumed the other, after a pause sufficient for the reply he in vain ex-

pected; « I need not tell an officer, who knows his duty so well, that seamen rarely love their pumps. »

« Whatever I may find necessary to order, Mr Earing, this ship's company will find it necessary to execute. »

There was a deep settled air of authority, in the manner with which this tardy answer was given, that did not fail of its impression. Earing recoiled a step, with a submissive manner, and affected to be lost in consulting the driving masses of the clouds; then, summoning his resolution, he attempted to renew the attack in a different quarter.

« Is it your deliberate opinion, Captain Wilder, » he said, using the title to which the claim of our adventurer might well be questioned, with a view to propitiate him; « is it then your deliberate opinion, that the 'Royal Caroline' can, by any human means, be made to drop yonder vessel? »

« I fear not, » returned the young man, drawing a breath so long, that all his secret concern seemed struggling in his breast for utterance.

« And, sir, with proper submission to your better education and authority in this ship, I *know* not. I have often seen these matches tried in my time; and well do I know that nothing is gained by straining a vessel, with the hope of getting to windward of one of these flyers! »

« Take you the glass, Earing, and tell me under what canvass the stranger holds his way, and what may be his distance, » said Wilder, thoughtfully, and without appearing to advert at all to what the other had just observed.

The honest and well-meaning mate deposed his hat on the quarter-deck, and, with an air of great respect, did as he was desired. Nor did he deem it necessary to give a precipitate answer to either of the interrogatories. When, however, his look had been long, grave, and deeply absorbed, he closed the glass with the palm of his broad hand, and replied, with the manner of one whose opinion was sufficiently matured.

« If yonder sail had been built and fitted like other mortal craft, » he said, « I should not be backward in pronouncing her a full-rigged

ship, under three single-reefed topsails, courses, spanker, and jib. »

« Has she no more ? »

« To that I would qualify, provided an opportunity were given me to make sure that she is, in all respects, as other vessels are. »

« And yet, Earing, with all this press of canvass, by the compass we have not left her a foot. »

« Lord, sir, » returned the mate, shaking his head, like one who was well convinced of the folly of such efforts, « if you should split every cloth in the main-course, by carrying on the ship you will never alter the bearings of that craft an inch, till the sun rises ! Then, indeed, such as have eyes, that are good enough, might perhaps see her sailing about among the clouds ; though it has never been my fortune, be it bad or be it good, to fall in with one of these cruisers after the day has fairly dawned. »

« And the distance ? » said Wilder ; « you have not yet spoken of her distance. »

« That is much as people choose to measure. She may be here, nigh enough to toss a biscuit into our tops ; or she may be there, where she seems to be, hull down in the horizon. »

« But, if where she seems to be ? »

« Why, she *seems* to be a vessel of about six hundred tons ; and, judging from appearances only, a man might be tempted to say she was a couple of leagues, more or less, under our lee. »

« I put her at the same ! Six miles to windward is not a little advantage, in a hard chase. By heavens, Earing, I'll drive the 'Caroline' out of water, but I'll leave him ! »

« That might be done, if the ship had wings like a curlew, or a sea-gull ; but, as it is, I think we are more likely to drive her under. »

« She bears her canvass well, so far. You know not what the boat can do, when urged. »

« I have seen her sailed in all weathers, Captain Wilder, but » — —

His mouth was suddenly closed. A vast black wave reared itself between the ship and the eastern horizon, and came rolling onward, seeming to threaten to engulf all before it. Even Wilder watched the shock with breathless anxiety, conscious, for the moment, that he had exceeded the bounds of sound discretion in urging his ship so powerfully against such a mass of water. The sea broke a few

fathoms from the bows of the 'Caroline,' and sent its surge in a flood of foam upon her decks. For half a minute, the forward part of the vessel disappeared, as though, unable to mount the swell, it were striving to go through it, and then she heavily emerged, gemmed with a million of the scintillating insects of the ocean. The ship had stopped, trembling in every joint, throughout her massive and powerful frame, like some affrighted courser; and, when she resumed her course, it was with a moderation that appeared to warn those who governed her movements of their indiscretion.

Earing faced his Commander in silence, perfectly conscious that nothing he could utter contained an argument like this. The seamen no longer hesitated to mutter their disapprobation aloud, and many a prophetic opinion was ventured concerning the consequences of such reckless risks. To all this Wilder turned a deaf or an insensible ear. Firm in his own secret purpose, he would have braved a greater hazard, to accomplish his object. But a distinct though smothered shriek, from the stern of the vessel, reminded him of the fears of others.

Turning quickly on his heel, he approached the still trembling Gertrude and her governess, who had both been, throughout the whole of those long and tedious hours, inobtrusive, but deeply interested, observers of his smallest movements.

« The vessel bore that shock so well, I have great reliance on her powers, » he said in a soothing voice, but with words that were intended to lull her into a blind security. « With a firm ship, a thorough seaman is never at a loss ! »

« Mr Wilder, » returned the governess, « I have seen much of this terrible element on which you live. It is therefore vain to think of deceiving me. I know that you are urging the ship beyond what is usual. Have you sufficient motive for this hardihood ? »

« Madam,—I have ! »

« And is it, like so many of your motives, to continue locked for ever in your own breast ? or may we, who are equal participators in its consequences, claim to share equally in the reason ? »

« Since you know so much of the profession, » returned the young man, slightly laughing, but

in tones that were rendered perhaps more alarming by the sounds produced in the unnatural effort, "you need not be told, that, in order to get a ship to windward, it is necessary to spread her canvass."

"You can, at least, answer one of my questions more directly: Is this wind sufficiently favourable to pass the dangerous shoals of the Hatteras?"

"I doubt it."

"Then, why not go to the place whence we came?"

"Will you consent to return?" demanded the youth, with the swiftness of thought.

"I would go to my father," said Gertrude, with a rapidity so nearly resembling his own, that the ardent girl appeared to want breath to utter the little she said.

"And I am willing, Mr Wilder, to abandon this ship entirely," calmly resumed the governess. "I require no explanation of all your mysterious warnings; restore us to our friends in Newport, and no further questions shall ever be asked."

"It might be done!" muttered our adven-

turer ; « it might be done !—A few busy hours would do it, with this wind.—Mr Earing ! »—

The mate was instantly at his elbow. Wilder pointed to the dim object to leeward ; and, handing him the glass, desired that he would take another view. Each looked, in his turn, long and closely.

« He shews no more sail ! » said the Commander impatiently, when his own prolonged gaze was ended.

« Not a cloth, sir. But what matters it, to such a craft, how much canvass is spread, or how the wind blows ? »

« Earing, I think there is too much southing in this breeze ; and there is more brewing in yonder streak of dusky clouds on our beam. Let the ship fall off a couple of points, or more, and take the strain off the spars, by a pull upon the weather braces. »

The simple-minded mate heard the order with an astonishment he did not care to conceal. There needed no explanation, to teach his experienced faculties, that the effect would be to go over the same track they had just passed, and that it was, in substance, abandon-

ing the objects of the voyage. He presumed to defer his compliance, in order to remonstrate.

“I hope there is no offence for an elderly seaman, like myself, Captain Wilder, in venturing an opinion on the weather,” he said. “When the pocket of the owner is interested, my judgment approves of going about, for I have no taste for land that the wind blows on, instead of off. But, by easing the ship with a reef or two, she would be jogging sea-ward; and all we gain would be clear gain; because it is so much off the Hatteras. Besides, who can say that to-morrow, or the next day, we sha’n’t have a puff out of America, here at north-west?”

“A couple of points fall off, and a pull upon your weather braces,” said Wilder, with startling quickness.

It would have exceeded the peaceful and submissive temperament of the honest Earing, to have delayed any longer. The orders were given to the inferiors; and, as a matter of course, they were obeyed—though ill-suppressed and portentous sounds of discontent, at the undetermined, and seemingly unreasonable,

changes in their officer's mind, might have been heard issuing from the mouths of Nighthead, and other veterans of the crew.

But to all these symptoms of disaffection Wilder remained, as before, utterly indifferent. If he heard them at all, he either disdained to yield them any notice, or, guided by a temporizing policy, he chose to appear unconscious of their import. In the mean time, the vessel, like a bird whose wing had wearied with struggling against the tempest, and which inclines from the gale to dart along an easier course, glided swiftly away, quartering the crests of the waves, or sinking gracefully into their troughs, as she yielded to the force of a wind that was now made to be favourable. The sea rolled on, in a direction that was no longer adverse to her course; and, as she receded from the breeze, the quantity of sail she had spread was no longer found trying to her powers of endurance. Still she had, in the opinion of all her crew, quite enough canvass exposed to a night of such a portentous aspect. But not so, in the judgment of the stranger who was charged with the guidance of her

destinies. In a voice that still admonished his inferiors of the danger of disobedience, he commanded several broad sheets of studding-sails to be set, in quick succession. Urged by these new impulses, the ship went careering over the waves; leaving a train of foam, in her track, that rivalled, in its volume and brightness, the tumbling summit of the largest swell.

When sail after sail had been set, until even Wilder was obliged to confess to himself that the 'Royal Caroline,' staunch as she was, would bear no more, our adventurer began to pace the deck again, and to cast his eyes about him, in order to watch the fruits of his new experiment. The change in the course of the Bristol trader had made a corresponding change in the apparent direction of the stranger, who yet floated in the horizon like a diminutive and misty shadow. Still the unerring compass told the watchful mariner, that she continued to maintain the same relative position as when first seen. No effort, on the part of Wilder, could apparently alter her bearing an inch. Another hour soon passed away, during which, as the log told him, the 'Caroline' had rolled

through more than three leagues of water, and still there lay the stranger in the west, as though it were merely a lessened shadow of herself, cast by the 'Caroline' upon the distant and dusky clouds. An alteration in his course exposed a broader surface of his canvass to the eyes of the spectators, but in nothing else was there any visible change. If his sails had been materially increased, the distance and the obscurity prevented even the understanding Earing from detecting it. Perhaps the excited mind of the worthy mate was too much disposed to believe in the miraculous powers possessed by his unaccountable neighbour, to admit of the full exercise of his experienced faculties on the occasion; but even Wilder, who vexed his sight, in often-repeated examinations, was obliged to confess to himself, that the stranger seemed to glide, across the waste of waters, more like a body floating in the air, than a ship resorting to the ordinary expedients of mariners.

Mrs Wyllys and her charge had, by this time, retired to their cabin; the former secretly felicitating herself on the prospect of soon

quitting a vessel that had commenced its voyage under such sinister circumstances as to have deranged the equilibrium of even her well-governed and highly-disciplined mind. Gertrude was left in ignorance of the change. To her uninstructed eye, all appeared the same on the wilderness of the ocean; Wilder having it in his power to alter the direction of his vessel as often as he pleased, without his fairer and more youthful passenger being any the wiser for the same.

Not so, however, with the intelligent Commander of the 'Caroline' himself. To him there was neither obscurity nor doubt, in the midst of his midnight path. His eye had long been familiar with every star that rose from out the waving bed of the sea, to set in another dark and ragged outline of the element; nor was there a blast, that swept across the ocean, that his burning cheek could not tell from what quarter of the heavens it poured out its power. He knew, and understood, each inclination made by the bows of his ship; his mind kept even pace with her windings and turnings, in all her trackless wanderings; and he

had little need to consult any of the accessories of his art, to tell him what course to steer, or in what manner to guide the movements of the nice machine he governed. Still was he unable to explain the extraordinary evolutions of the stranger. His smallest change seemed rather anticipated than followed; and his hopes of eluding a vigilance, that proved so watchful, was baffled by a facility of manœuvring, and a superiority of sailing, that really began to assume, even to his intelligent eyes, the appearance of some unaccountable agency.

While our adventurer was engaged in the gloomy musings that such impressions were not ill adapted to excite, the heavens and the sea began to exhibit another aspect. The bright streak which had so long hung along the eastern horizon, as though the curtain of the firmament had been slightly opened to admit a passage for the winds, was now suddenly closed; and heavy masses of black clouds began to gather in that quarter, until vast volumes of the vapour were piled upon the water, blending the two elements in one. On the other hand, the dark canopy lifted in

the west, and a long belt of lurid light was shed over the view. In this flood of bright and portentous mist the stranger still floated, though there were moments when his faint and fanciful outlines seemed to be melting into thin air.

CHAPTER VI.

—— « Yet again? What do you here? Shall we give o'er, and drown? Have you a mind to sink? »

Tempest.

OUR watchful adventurer was not blind to these well-known and sinister omens. No sooner did the peculiar atmosphere, by which the mysterious image that he so often examined was suddenly surrounded, catch his eye, than his voice was heard in the clear, powerful, and exciting notes of warning.

« Stand by, » he called aloud, « to in all studding sails ! Down with them ! » he added, scarcely giving his former words time to reach the ears of his subordinates. « Down with every rag of them, fore and aft the ship ! Man the top-gallant clew-lines, Mr Earing. Clew

up, and clew down! In with every thing, cheerily, men! In!»

This was a language to which the crew of the 'Caroline' were no strangers, and one which was doubly welcome; since the meanest seaman of them all had long thought that his unknown Commander had been heedlessly trifling with the safety of the vessel, by the hardy manner in which he disregarded the wild symptoms of the weather. But they undervalued the keen-eyed vigilance of Wilder. He had certainly driven the Bristol trader through the water at a rate she had never been known to have gone before; but, thus far, the facts themselves attested in his favour, since no injury was the consequence of what they deemed his temerity. At the quick, sudden order just given, however, the whole ship was instantly in an uproar. A dozen seamen called to each other, from different parts of the vessel, each striving to lift his voice above the roaring ocean; and there was every appearance of a general and inextricable confusion; but the same authority which had aroused them, thus unexpectedly, into activity, produced

order, from their ill-directed though vigorous efforts.

Wilder had spoken, to awaken the drowsy, and to excite the torpid. The instant he found each man on the alert, he resumed his orders, with a calmness that gave a direction to the powers of all, but still with an energy that he well knew was called for by the occasion. The enormous sheets of duck, which had looked like so many light clouds in the murky and threatening heavens, were soon seen fluttering wildly, as they descended from their high places; and, in a few minutes, the ship was reduced to the action of her more secure and heavier canvass. To effect this object, every man in the ship had exerted his powers to the utmost, under the guidance of the steady but rapid mandates of their Commander. Then followed a short and apprehensive breathing pause. Every eye was turned towards the quarter where the ominous signs had been discovered; and each individual endeavoured to read their import, with an intelligence correspondent to the degree of skill he might have acquired, during his particular period of ser-

vice, on that treacherous element which was now his home.

The dim tracery of the stranger's form had been swallowed by the flood of misty light, which, by this time, rolled along the sea like drifting vapour, semi-pellucid, preternatural, and seemingly tangible. The ocean itself appeared admonished that a quick and violent change was nigh. The waves had ceased to break in their former foaming and brilliant crests; but black masses of the water were seen lifting their surly summits against the eastern horizon, no longer relieved by their scintillating brightness, or shedding their own peculiar and lucid atmosphere around them. The breeze which had been so fresh, and which had even blown, at times, with a force that nearly amounted to a little gale, was lulling and becoming uncertain, as though awed by the more violent power that was gathering along the borders of the sea, in the direction of the neighbouring continent. Each moment, the eastern puffs of air lost their strength, and became more and more feeble, until, in an incredibly short period, the heavy sails were

heard flapping against the masts — a frightful and ominous calm succeeding. At this instant, a glancing, flashing gleam lighted the fearful obscurity of the ocean; and a roar, like that of a sudden burst of thunder, bellowed along the waters. The seamen turned their startled looks on each other, and stood stupid, as though a warning had been given, from the heavens themselves, of what was to follow. But their calm and more sagacious Commander put a different construction on the signal. His lip curled, in high professional pride, and his mouth moved rapidly, while he muttered to himself, with a species of scorn,—

« Does he think we sleep? Ay, he has got it himself, and would open our eyes to what is coming! What does he imagine we have been about, since the middle watch was set? »

Then, Wilder made a swift turn or two on the quarter-deck, never ceasing to bend his quick glances from one quarter of the heavens to another; from the black and lulling water on which his vessel was rolling, to the sails; and from his silent and profoundly expectant crew, to the dim lines of spars that were waving above

his head, like so many pencils tracing their curvilinear and wanton images over the murky volumes of the superincumbent clouds.

« Lay the after-yards square! » he said, in a voice which was heard by every man on deck, though his words were apparently spoken but little above his breath. Even the creaking of the blocks, as the spars came slowly and heavily round to the indicated position, contributed to the imposing character of the moment, and sounded, in the ears of all the instructed listeners, like notes of fearful preparation.

« Haul up the courses! » resumed Wilder, after a thoughtful, brief interval, with the same eloquent calmness of manner. Then, taking another glance at the threatening horizon, he added, with emphasis, « Furl them—furl them both: Away aloft, and hand your courses, » he continued, in a shout; « roll them up, cheerily; in with them, boys, cheerily; in! »

The conscious seamen took their impulses from the tones of their Commander. In a moment, twenty dark forms were seen leaping up the rigging, with the alacrity of so many

quadrupeds ; and, in another minute, the vast and powerful sheets of canvass were effectually rendered harmless, by securing them in tight rolls to their respective spars. The men descended as swiftly as they had mounted to the yards ; and then succeeded another short and breathing pause. At this moment, a candle would have sent its flame perpendicularly towards the heavens. The ship, missing the steadying power of the wind, rolled heavily in the troughs of the seas, which, however, began to be more diminutive, at each instant ; as though the startled element was recalling, into the security of its own vast bosom, that portion of its particles which had, just before, been permitted to gambol so madly over its surface. The water washed sullenly along the side of the ship, or, as she labouring rose from one of her frequent falls into the hollows of the waves, it shot back into the ocean from her decks, in numberless little glittering cascades. Every hue of the heavens, every sound of the element, and each dusky and anxious countenance that was visible, helped to proclaim the intense interest of the moment. It was in this brief

interval of expectation, and inactivity, that the mates again approached their Commander.

« It is an awful night, Captain Wilder! » said Earing, presuming on his rank to be the first of the two to speak.

« I have known far less notice given of a shift of wind, » was the steady answer.

« We have had time to gather in our kites, 'tis true, sir; but there are signs and warnings, that come with this change, at which the oldest seaman has reason to take heed! »

« Yes, » continued Nighthead, in a voice that sounded hoarse and powerful, even amid the fearful accessories of that scene; « yes, it is no trifling commission that can call people, that I shall not name, out upon the water in such a night as this. It was in just such weather that I saw the 'Vesuvius' ketch go to a place so deep, that her own mortar would not have been able to have sent a bomb into the open air, had hands and fire been there fit to let it off! »

« Ay; and it was in such a time that the Greenlandman was cast upon the Orkneys, in as flat a calm as ever lay on the sea. »

«Gentlemen,» said Wilder, with a peculiar and perhaps an ironical emphasis on the word, «what is it you would have? There is not a breath of air stirring, and the ship is naked to her topsails!»

It would have been difficult for either of the two malcontents to have given a very satisfactory answer to this question. Both were secretly goaded by mysterious and superstitious apprehensions, that were powerfully aided by the more real and intelligible aspect of the night; but neither had so far forgotten his manhood, and his professional pride, as to lay bare the full extent of his own weakness, at a moment when he was liable to be called upon for the exhibition of qualities of a far more positive and determined character. Still, the feeling that was uppermost betrayed itself in the reply of Earing, though in an indirect and covert manner.

«Yes, the vessel is snug enough now,» he said, «though eye-sight has shewn us all it is no easy matter to drive a freighted ship through the water as fast as one of your flying craft can go, aboard of which no man can say, who

stands at the helm, by what compass she steers, or what is her draught! »

« Ay, » resumed Nighthead, « I call the 'Caroline' fast for an honest trader, and few square-rigged boats are there, who do not wear the pennants of the King, that can eat her out of the wind, or bring her into their wake, with studding-sails abroad. But this is a time, and an hour, to make a seaman think. Look at yon hazy light, here, in with the land, that is coming so fast down upon us, and then tell me whether it comes from the coast of America, or whether it comes from out of the stranger who has been so long running under our lee, but who has got, or is fast getting, the wind of us at last, and yet none here can say how, or why. I have just this much, and no more, to say : Give me for consort a craft whose Captain I know, or give me none! »

Such is your taste, Mr Nighthead, » said Wilder, coldly ; « mine may, by some accident, be very different. »

« Yes, yes, » observed the more cautious and prudent Earing, « in time of war, and with letters of marque aboard, a man may honestly

hope the sail he sees should have a stranger for her master ; or otherwise he would never fall in with an enemy. But, though an Englishman born myself, I should rather give the ship in that mist a clear sea, seeing that I neither know her nation nor her cruise. Ah, Captain Wilder, yonder is an awful sight for the morning watch ! Often, and often, have I seen the sun rise in the east, and no harm done ; but little good can come of a day when the light first breaks in the west. Cheerfully would I give the owners the last month's pay, hard as I have earned it with my toil, did I but know under what flag yonder stranger sails. »

« Frenchman, Don, or Devil, yonder he comes ! » cried Wilder. Then, turning towards the silent and attentive crew, he shouted, in a voice that was appalling by its vehemence and warning, « Let run the after halyards ! round with the fore-yard ! round with it, men, with a will ! »

These were cries that the startled crew perfectly understood. Every nerve and muscle were exerted to execute the orders, in time to be in readiness for the approaching tempest.

No man spoke; but each expended the utmost of his power and skill in direct and manly efforts. Nor was there, in verity, a moment to lose, or a particle of human strength expended here, without a sufficient object.

The lucid and fearful-looking mist, which, for the last quarter of an hour, had been gathering in the north-west, was now driving down upon them with the speed of a racehorse. The air had already lost the damp and peculiar feeling of an easterly breeze; and little eddies were beginning to flutter among the masts — precursors of the coming squall. Then, a rushing, roaring sound was heard moaning along the ocean, whose surface was first dimpled, next ruffled, and finally covered, with one sheet of clear, white, and spotless foam. At the next moment, the power of the wind fell full upon the inert and labouring Bristol trader.

As the gust approached, Wilder had seized the slight opportunity, afforded by the changeful puffs of air, to get the ship as much as possible before the wind; but the sluggish movement of the vessel met neither the wishes of his own impatience nor the exigencies of

the moment. Her bows had slowly and heavily fallen off from the north, leaving her precisely in a situation to receive the first shock on her broadside. Happy it was, for all who had life at risk in that defenceless vessel, that she was not fated to receive the whole weight of the tempest at a blow. The sails fluttered and trembled on their massive yards, bellying and collapsing alternately for a minute, and then the rushing wind swept over them in a hurricane.

The 'Caroline' received the blast like a stout and buoyant ship, yielding readily to its impulse, until her side lay nearly incumbent on the element in which she floated; and then, as if the fearful fabric were conscious of its jeopardy, it seemed to lift its reclining masts again, struggling to work its way heavily through the water.

"Keep the helm a-weather! Jam it a-weather, for your life!" shouted Wilder, amid the roar of the gust.

The veteran seaman at the wheel obeyed the order with steadiness, but in vain he kept his eyes riveted on the margin of his head sail, in

order to watch the manner the ship would obey its power. Twice more, in as many moments, the tall masts fell towards the horizon, waving as often gracefully upward, and then they yielded to the mighty pressure of the wind, until the whole machine lay prostrate on the water.

« Reflect! » said Wilder, seizing the bewildered Earing by the arm, as the latter rushed madly up the steep of the deck; « it is our duty to be calm : Bring hither an axe. »

Quick as the thought which gave the order, the admonished mate complied, jumping into the mizzen-channels of the ship, to execute, with his own hands, the mandate that he well knew must follow.

« Shall I cut? » he demanded, with uplifted arms, and in a voice that atoned for his momentary confusion, by its steadiness and force.

« Hold! Does the ship mind her helm at all? »

« Not an inch, sir. »

« Then cut, » Wilder clearly and calmly added.

A single blow sufficed for the discharge of

the momentary act. Extended to the utmost powers of endurance, by the vast weight it upheld, the lanyard struck by Earing no sooner parted, than each of its fellows snapped in succession, leaving the mast dependant on itself alone for the support of all its ponderous and complicated hamper. The cracking of the wood came next; and then the rigging fell, like a tree that had been sapped at its foundation, the little distance that still existed between it and the sea.

« Does she fall off? » instantly called Wilder to the observant seaman at the wheel.

« She yielded a little, sir; but this new squall is bringing her up again. »

« Shall I cut? » shouted Earing from the main rigging, whither he had leaped, like a tiger who had bounded on his prey.

« Cut! » was the answer.

A loud and imposing crash soon succeeded this order, though not before several heavy blows had been struck into the massive mast itself. As before, the seas received the tumbling maze of spars, rigging, and sails; the vessel surging, at the same instant, from its recum-

bent position, and rolling far and heavily to windward.

« She rights ! she rights ! » exclaimed twenty voices, which had been hitherto mute, in a suspense that involved life and death.

« Keep her dead away ! » added the still calm but deeply authoritative voice of the young Commander. « Stand by to furl the fore-topsail — let it hang a moment to drag the ship clear of the wreck — cut, cut — cheerily, men — hatchets and knives — cut *with* all, and cut *of* all ! »

As the men now worked with the freshened vigour of revived hope, the ropes that still confined the fallen spars to the vessel were quickly severed ; and the ‘Caroline,’ by this time dead before the gale, appeared barely to touch the foam that covered the sea, like a bird that was swift upon the wing skimming the waters. The wind came over the waste in gusts that rumbled like distant thunder, and with a power that seemed to threaten to lift the ship and its contents from its proper element, to deliver it to one still more variable and treacherous. As a prudent and sagacious

seaman had let fly the halyards of the solitary sail that remained, at the moment when the squall approached, the loosened but lowered topsail was now distended in a manner that threatened to drag after it the only mast which still stood. Wilder instantly saw the necessity of getting rid of this sail, and he also saw the utter impossibility of securing it. Calling Earing to his side, he pointed out the danger, and gave the necessary order.

« Yon spar cannot stand such shocks much longer, » he concluded ; « and, should it go over the bows, some fatal blow might be given to the ship at the rate she is moving. A man or two must be sent aloft to cut the sail from the yards. »

« The stick is bending like a willow whip, » returned the mate, « and the lower mast itself is sprung. There would be great danger in trusting a life in that top, while such wild squalls as these are breathing around us. »

« You may be right, » returned Wilder, with a sudden conviction of the truth of what the other had said : « Stay you then here ; and, if any thing befall me, try to get the vessel into port as far north as the Capes of Virginia, at

least ; — on no account attempt Hatteras, in the present condition of » — —

« What would you do, Captain Wilder ? » interrupted the mate, laying his hand powerfully on the shoulder of his Commander, who, he observed, had already thrown his sea-cap on the deck, and was preparing to divest himself of some of his outer garments.

« I go aloft, to ease the mast of that topsail, without which we lose the spar, and possibly the ship. »

« Ay, ay, I see that plain enough ; but, shall it be said, Another did the duty of Edward Earing ? It is your business to carry the vessel into the Capes of Virginia, and mine to cut the topsail adrift. If harm comes to me, why, put it in the log, with a word or two about the manner in which I played my part : That, is always the best and most proper epitaph for a sailor. »

Wilder made no resistance, but resumed his watchful and reflecting attitude, with the simplicity of one who had been too long trained to the discharge of certain obligations himself, to manifest surprise that another should ac-

knowledge their imperative character. In the mean time, Earing proceeded steadily to perform what he had just promised. Passing into the waist of the ship, he provided himself with a suitable hatchet, and then, without speaking a syllable to any of the mute but attentive seamen, he sprang into the fore-rigging, every strand and rope-yarn of which was tightened by the strain nearly to snapping. The understanding eyes of his observers comprehended his intention; and, with precisely the same pride of station as had urged him to the dangerous undertaking, four or five of the older mariners jumped upon the ratlings, to mount with him into an air that apparently teemed with a hundred hurricanes.

« Lie down out of that fore-rigging, » shouted Wilder, through a deck-trumpet; « lie down; all, but the mate, lie down! » His words were borne past the inattentive ears of the excited and mortified followers of Earing, but they failed of their effect. Each man was too much bent on his own earnest purpose to listen to the sounds of recall. In less than a minute, the whole were scattered along the yards,

prepared to obey the signal of their officer. The mate cast a look about him ; and, perceiving that the time was comparatively favourable, he struck a blow upon the large rope that confined one of the angles of the distended and bursting sail to the lower yard. The effect was much the same as would be produced by knocking away the key-stone of an ill-cemented arch. The canvass broke from all its fastenings with a loud explosion, and, for an instant, was seen sailing in the air ahead of the ship, as though sustained on the wings of an eagle. The vessel rose on a sluggish wave—the lingering remains of the former breeze—and then settled heavily over the rolling surge, borne down alike by its own weight and the renewed violence of the gusts. At this critical instant, while the seamen aloft were still gazing in the direction in which the little cloud of canvass had disappeared, a lanyard of the lower rigging parted with a crack that even reached the ears of Wilder.

« Lie down ! » he shouted fearfully through his trumpet ; « down by the backstays ; down for your lives ; every man of you, down ! »

A solitary individual, of them all, profited by the warning, and was seen gliding towards the deck with the velocity of the wind. But rope parted after rope, and the fatal snapping of the wood instantly followed. For a moment, the towering maze tottered, and seemed to wave towards every quarter of the heavens; and then, yielding to the movements of the hull, the whole fell, with a heavy crash, into the sea. Each cord, lanyard, or stay snapped, when it received the strain of its new position, as though it had been made of thread, leaving the naked and despoiled hull of the 'Caroline' to drive onward before the tempest, as if nothing had occurred to impede its progress.

A mute and eloquent pause succeeded this disaster. It appeared as if the elements themselves were appeased by their work, and something like a momentary lull in the awful rushing of the winds might have been fancied. Wilder sprang to the side of the vessel, and distinctly beheld the victims, who still clung to their frail support. He even saw Earing waving his hand, in adieu, with a seaman's heart, and like a man who not only felt how desperate was his

situation, but one who knew how to meet his fate with resignation. Then the wreck of spars, with all who clung to it, was swallowed up in the body of the frightful, preternatural-looking mist which extended on every side of them, from the ocean to the clouds.

« Stand by, to clear away a boat! » shouted Wilder, without pausing to think of the impossibility of one's swimming, or of effecting the least good, in so violent a tornado.

But the amazed and confounded seamen who remained needed not instruction in this matter. No man moved, nor was the smallest symptom of obedience given. The mariners looked wildly around them, each endeavouring to trace, in the dusky countenance of the other, his opinion of the extent of the evil; but not a mouth was opened among them all.

« It is too late — it is too late! » murmured Wilder to himself; « human skill and human efforts could not save them! »

« Sail, ho! » Nighthead muttered at his elbow, in a voice that teemed with a species of superstitious awe.

« Let him come on, » returned his young

Commander, bitterly ; « the mischief is ready finished to his hands ! »

« Should yon be a mortal ship, it is our duty to the owners and the passengers to speak her, if a man can make his voice heard in this tempest, » the second mate continued, pointing, through the haze, at the dim object that was certainly at hand.

« Speak her !—passengers ! » muttered Wilder, involuntarily repeating his words. « No ; any thing is better than speaking her. Do you see the vessel that is driving down upon us so fast ? » he sternly demanded of the watchful seaman who still clung to the wheel of the ‘ Caroline.’

« Ay, ay, sir, » was the brief, professional reply.

« Give her a berth — sheer away hard to port — perhaps he may pass us in the gloom, now we are no higher than our decks. Give the ship a broad sheer, I say, sir. »

The same laconic answer as before was given ; and, for a few moments, the Bristol trader was seen diverging a little from the line in which the other approached ; but a second glance assured Wilder that the attempt was useless.

The strange ship (and every man on board felt certain it was the same that had so long been seen hanging in the north-western horizon) came on, through the mist, with a swiftness that nearly equalled the velocity of the tempestuous winds themselves. Not a thread of canvass was seen on board her. Each line of spars, even to the tapering and delicate top-gallant-masts, was in its place, preserving the beauty and symmetry of the whole fabric; but nowhere was the smallest fragment of a sail opened to the gale. Under her bows rolled a volume of foam, that was even discernible amid the universal agitation of the ocean; and, as she came within sound, the sullen roar of the water might have been likened to the noise of a cascade. At first, the spectators on the decks of the 'Caroline' believed they were not seen, and some of the men called madly for lights, in order that the disasters of the night might not terminate in the dreaded encounter.

« No ! » exclaimed Wilder; « too many see us there already ! »

« No, no, » muttered Nighthead; « no fear.

but we are seen; and by such eyes, too, as never yet looked out of mortal head! »

The seamen paused. In another instant, the long-seen and mysterious ship was within a hundred feet of them. The very power of that wind, which was wont usually to raise the billows, now pressed the element, with the weight of mountains, into its bed. The sea was everywhere a sheet of froth, but no water swelled above the level of the surface. The instant a wave lifted itself from the security of the vast depths, the fluid was borne away before the tornado in driving, glittering spray. Along this frothy but comparatively motionless surface, then, the stranger came booming, with the steadiness and grandeur with which a dark cloud is seen to sail before the hurricane. No sign of life was any where discovered about her. If men looked out, from their secret places, upon the straitened and discomfited wreck of the Bristol trader, it was covertly, and as darkly as the tempest before which they drove. Wilder held his breath, for the moment the stranger drew nighest, in the very excess of suspense; but, as he saw no signal of recogni-

tion, no human form, nor any intention to arrest, if possible, the furious career of the other, a smile of exultation gleamed across his countenance, and his lips moved rapidly, as though he found pleasure in being abandoned to his distress. The stranger drove by, like a dark vision; and, ere another minute, her form was beginning to grow less distinct, in a thickening body of the spray to leeward.

« She is going out of sight in the mist! » exclaimed Wilder, when he drew his breath, after the fearful suspense of the few last moments.

« Ay, in mist, or clouds, » responded Night-head, who now kept obstinately at his elbow, watching, with the most jealous distrust, the smallest movement of his unknown Commander.

« In the heavens, or in the sea, I care not, provided she be gone. »

« Most seamen would rejoice to see a strange sail, from the hull of a vessel shaved to the deck like this. »

« Men often court their destruction, from ignorance of their own interests. Let him

drive on, say I, and pray I! He goes four feet to our one; and now I ask no better favour than that this hurricane may blow until the sun shall rise. »

Nighthead started, and cast an oblique glance, which resembled denunciation, at his companion. To his blunted faculties, and superstitious mind, there was profanity in thus invoking the tempest, at a moment when the winds seemed already to be pouring out their utmost wrath.

« This is a heavy squall, I will allow, » he said, « and such an one as many mariners pass whole lives without seeing; but he knows little of the sea who thinks there is not more wind where this comes from. »

« Let it blow! » cried the other, striking his hands together a little wildly; « I pray only for wind! »

All the doubts of Nighthead, as to the character of the young stranger who had so unaccountably got possession of the office of Nicholas Nichols, if, indeed, any remained, were now removed. He walked forward among the silent and thoughtful crew, with the air of

a man whose opinion was settled. Wilder, however, paid no attention to the movements of his subordinate, but continued pacing the deck for hours; now casting his eyes at the heavens, or now sending frequent and anxious glances around the limited horizon, while the 'Royal Caroline' still continued drifting before the wind, a shorn and naked wreck.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Sit still, and hear the last of our sea sorrow. ”

Shakspeare.

THE weight of the tempest had been felt at that hapless moment when Earing and his unfortunate companions were precipitated from their giddy elevation into the sea. Though the wind continued to blow long after this fatal event, it was with a constantly diminishing power. As the gale decreased, the sea began to rise, and the vessel to labour in proportion. Then followed two hours of anxious watchfulness on the part of Wilder, during which the whole of his professional knowledge was needed, in order to keep the despoiled hull of the Bristol trader from becoming a prey to the greedy waters. His consummate skill, however,

proved equal to the task that was required at his hands ; and, just as the symptoms of day were becoming visible along the east, both wind and waves were rapidly subsiding together. During the whole of this doubtful period, our adventurer did not receive the smallest assistance from any of the crew, with the exception of two experienced seamen whom he had previously stationed at the wheel. But to this neglect he was indifferent ; since little more was required than his own judgment, seconded, as it faithfully was, by the exertions of the mariners more immediately under his eye.

The day dawned on a scene entirely different from that which had marked the tempestuous deformity of the night. The whole fury of the winds appeared to have been expended in their precocious effort. From the moderate gale, to which they had fallen by the end of the middle watch, they further altered to a vacillating breeze ; and, ere the sun had risen, the changeful air had subsided into a flat calm. The sea went down as suddenly as the power which had raised it vanished ; and, by the time the

broad golden light of the sun was shed fairly and fully upon the unstable element, it lay unruffled and polished, though still gently heaving in swells so long and heavy as to resemble the placid respiration of a sleeping infant.

The hour was still early, and the serene appearance of the sky and the ocean gave every promise of a day which might be passed in devising the expedients necessary to bring the ship again, in some measure, under the command of her people.

« Sound the pumps, » said Wilder, observing that the crew were appearing from the different places in which they had bestowed their cares and their persons together, during the later hours of the night.

« Do you hear me, sir ? » he added sternly, observing that no one moved to obey his order. « Let the pumps be sounded, and the ship cleared of every inch of water. »

Nighthead, to whom Wilder had now addressed himself, regarded his Commander with an oblique and sullen eye, and then exchanged singularly intelligent glances with his comrades, before he saw fit to make the smallest motion

towards compliance. But there was that, in the authoritative mien of his superior, which finally induced him to comply. The dilatory manner in which the seamen performed the duty was quickened, however, as the rod ascended, and the well-known signs of a formidable leak met their eyes. The experiment was repeated with greater activity, and with far more precision.

« If witchcraft can clear the hold of a ship that is already half full of water, » said Night-head, casting another sullen glance towards the attentive Wilder, « the sooner it is done the better; for the whole cunning of something more than a bungler in the same will be needed, in order to make the pumps of the 'Royal Caroline' suck! »

« Does the ship leak? » demanded his superior, with a quickness of utterance which sufficiently proclaimed how important he deemed the intelligence.

« Yesterday, I would have boldly put my name to the articles of any craft that floats the ocean; and, had the Captain asked me if I understood her nature and character, as cer-

tain as that my name is Francis Nighthead, I should have told him, yes. But I find that the oldest seaman may still learn something of the water; though it should be got in crossing a ferry in a flat. »

« What mean you, sir? » demanded Wilder, who, for the first time, began to note the mutinous looks assumed by his mate, no less than the threatening manner in which he was seconded by the crew. « Have the pumps rigged without delay, and clear the ship of the water. »

Nighthead slowly complied with the former part of this order; and, in a few moments, every thing was arranged to commence the necessary, and, as it would seem, urgent duty of pumping. But no man lifted his hand to the laborious employment. The quick eye of Wilder, who had now taken the alarm, was not slow in detecting this reluctance; and he repeated the order more sternly, calling to two of the seamen, by name, to set the example of obedience. The men hesitated, giving an opportunity to the mate to confirm them, by his voice, in their mutinous intentions.

« What need of hands to work a pump in a vessel like this ? » he said, with a coarse laugh, but in which secret terror struggled strangely with open malice. « After what we have all seen this night, none here will be amazed, should the vessel begin to spout out the brine like a breathing whale. »

« What am I to understand by this hesitation, and by this language ? » said Wilder, approaching Nighthead with a firm step, and an eye too proud to quail before the plainest symptoms of insubordination. « Is it you, sir, who should be foremost in exertion at a moment like this, who dare to set an example of disobedience ? »

The mate recoiled a pace, and his lips moved; still he uttered no audible reply. Wilder once more bade him, in a calm and authoritative tone, lay his own hands to the brake. Nighthead then found his voice, in time to make a flat refusal; and, at the next moment, he was felled to the feet of his indignant Commander, by a blow he had neither the address nor the power to resist. This act of decision was succeeded by one single moment of breathless, wavering silence among the crew; and then the

common cry, and the general rush of every man upon our defenceless and solitary adventurer, were the signals that open hostility had commenced. A shriek from the quarter-deck arrested their efforts, just as a dozen hands were laid violently upon the person of Wilder, and, for the moment, occasioned a truce. It was the fearful cry of Gertrude, which possessed even the influence to still the savage intentions of a set of beings so rude and so unnurtured as those whose passions had just been awakened into fierce activity. Wilder was released; and all eyes turned, by a common impulse, in the direction of the sound.

During the more momentous hours of the past night, the very existence of the passengers below had been forgotten by most of those whose duty kept them to the deck. If they had been recalled at all to the recollection of any, it was at those fleeting moments when the mind of the young mariner, who directed the movements of the ship, found leisure to catch stolen glimpses of softer scenes than the wild warring of the elements that was so actively raging before his eyes. Nighthad had named them,

as he would have made allusion to a part of the cargo, but their fate had little influence on his hardened nature. Mrs Wyllys and her charge had therefore remained below during the whole period, perfectly unapprised of the disasters of the intervening time. Buried in the recesses of their berths, they had heard the roaring of the winds, and the incessant washing of the waters; but these usual accompaniments of a storm had served to conceal the crashing of masts, and the hoarse cries of the mariners. For the moments of terrible suspense, while the Bristol trader lay on her side, the better informed governess had, indeed, some fearful glimmerings of the truth; but, conscious of her uselessness, and unwilling to alarm her less instructed companion, she had sufficient self-command to be mute. The subsequent silence, and comparative calm, induced her to believe that she had been mistaken in her apprehensions; and, long ere morning dawned, both she and Gertrude had sunk into sweet and refreshing slumbers. They had risen and mounted to the deck together, and were still in the first burst of their wonder at the desolation which

met their gaze, when the long-meditated attack on Wilder was made.

«What means this awful change?» demanded Mrs Wyllys, with a lip that quivered, and a cheek which, notwithstanding the extraordinary power she possessed over her feelings, was blanched to the colour of death.

The eye of Wilder was glowing, and his brow was dark as those heavens from which they had just so happily escaped, as he answered, menacing his assailants with an arm,—

«It means mutiny, Madam; rascally, cowardly mutiny!»

«Could mutiny strip a vessel of her masts, and leave her a helpless log upon the sea?»

«Hark ye, Madam!» roughly interrupted the mate; «to you I will speak freely; for it is well known who you are, and that you came on board the ‘Caroline’ a paying passenger. This night have I seen the heavens and the ocean behave as I have never seen them behave before. Ships have been running afore the wind, light and buoyant as corks, with all their spars stepped and steady, when other ships have been shaved of every mast as close as the

razor sweeps the chin. Cruisers have been fallen in with, sailing without living hands to work them ; and, all together, no man here has ever before passed a middle watch like the one gone by. »

« And what has this to do with the violence I have just witnessed ? Is the vessel fated to endure every evil ! — Can *you* explain this, Mr Wilder ? »

« You cannot say, at least, you had no warning of danger, » returned Wilder, smiling bitterly.

« Ay, the devil is obliged to be honest on compulsion, » resumed the mate. « Each of his imps sails with his orders ; and, thank Heaven ! however he may be minded to overlook the same, he has neither courage nor power to do it. Otherwise, a peaceful voyage would be such a rarity, in these unsettled times, that few men would be found hardy enough to venture on the water for a livelihood. — A warning ! Ay, we will own you gave us open and frequent warning. It was a notice, that the consignee should not have overlooked, when Nicholas Nichols met with the hurt, as the anchor was leaving the bottom. I never knew an accident

happen at such a time, and no evil come of it. Then, had we a warning with the old man in the boat; besides the never-failing ill luck of sending the pilot violently out of the ship. As if all this wasn't enough, instead of taking a hint, and lying peaceably at our anchors, we got the ship under way, and left a safe and friendly harbour of a Friday, of all the days in a week! (*) So far from being surprised at what has happened, I only wonder at finding myself still a living man; the reason of which is simply this, that I have given my faith where faith only is due, and not to unknown mariners and strange Commanders. Had Edward Earing done the same, he might still have had a plank between him and the bottom; but, though half inclined to believe in the truth, he had, after

(*) The superstition, that Friday is an evil day, was not peculiar to Nighthead; it prevails, more or less, among seamen, to this hour. An intelligent merchant of Connecticut had a desire to do his part in eradicating an impression that is sometimes inconvenient. He caused the keel of a vessel to be laid on a Friday; she was launched on a Friday; named the 'Friday;' and sailed on her first voyage on a Friday. Unfortunately for the success of this well-intentioned experiment, neither vessel nor crew were ever again heard of!

all, too much leaning to superstition and credulity. »

This laboured and characteristic profession of faith in the mate, though sufficiently intelligible to Wilder, was still a perfect enigma to his female listeners. But Nighthead had not formed his resolution by halves, neither had he gone thus far, with any intention to stop short of the completion of his whole design. In a very few summary words, he explained to Mrs Wyllys the desolate condition of the ship, and the utter improbability that she could continue to float many hours; since actual observation had told him that her lower hold was already half full of water.

« And what is then to be done? » demanded the governess, casting a glance of bitter distress towards the pallid and attentive Gertrude. « Is there no sail in sight, to take us from the wreck? or must we perish in our helplessness! »

« God protect us from any more strange sails! » exclaimed the surly Nighthead. « There we have the pinnacle hanging at the stern, and here must be land at some forty leagues to the north-west. Water and food are plenty, and

twelve stout hands can soon pull a boat to the continent of America ; that is, always provided, America is left where it was seen no later than at the sun-set of yesterday. »

» You then propose to abandon the vessel ? »

« I do. The interest of the owners is dear to all good seamen, but life is sweeter than gold. »

« The will of Heaven be done ! But surely you meditate no violence against this gentleman, who, I am quite certain, has governed the vessel, in very critical circumstances, with a discretion far beyond his years ! »

Nighthead muttered his intentions, whatever they might be, to himself ; and then he walked apart, apparently to confer with the men, who already seemed but too well disposed to second any of his views, however mistaken or lawless. During the few moments of suspense that succeeded, Wilder stood silent and composed, a smile of something like scorn struggling about his lip, and maintaining the air rather of one who had power to decide on the fortunes of others, than of a man whose own fate was most probably at that very moment in dis-

cussion. When the dull minds of the seamen had arrived at their conclusion, the mate advanced to proclaim the result. Indeed, words were unnecessary, in order to make known a very material part of their decision; for a party of the men proceeded instantly to lower the stern-boat into the water, while others set about supplying it with the necessary means of subsistence.

« There is room for all the Christians in the ship to stow themselves in this pinnace, » resumed Nighthead; « and as for those that place their dependance on any particular persons, why, let them call for aid where they have been used to receive it. »

« From all which I am to infer that it is your intention, » said Wilder, calmly, « to abandon the wreck, and your duty? »

The half-awed but still resentful mate returned a look in which fear and triumph struggled for the mastery, as he answered,—

« You, who know how to sail a ship without a crew, can never want a boat! Besides, you shall never say to your friends, whoever they may be, that we leave you without the means of

“reaching the land, if you are indeed a land-bird at all. There is the launch.”

“There is the launch! but well do you know, that, without masts, all your united strengths could not lift it from the deck; else would it not be left.”

“They that took the masts out of the ‘Caroline’ can put them in again,” rejoined a grinning seaman; “it will not be an hour after we leave you, before a sheer-hulk will come alongside, to step the spars again, and then you may go cruise in company.”

Wilder appeared to be superior to any reply. He began to pace the deck, thoughtful, it is true, but still composed, and entirely self-possessed. In the mean time, as a common desire to quit the wreck as soon as possible actuated all the men, their preparations advanced with incredible activity. The wondering and alarmed females had hardly time to think clearly on the extraordinary situation in which they found themselves, before they saw the form of the helpless Master borne past them to the boat; and, in another minute, they were summoned to take their places at his side.

Thus imperiously called upon to act, they began to feel the necessity of decision. Remonstrances, they feared, would be useless; for the fierce and malignant looks which were cast, from time to time, at Wilder, as the labour proceeded, proclaimed the danger of awakening such obstinate and ignorant minds into renewed acts of violence. The governess bethought her of an appeal to the wounded man; but the look of wild care which he had cast about him, on being lifted to the deck, and the expression of bodily and mental pain that gleamed across his rugged features, as he buried them in the blankets by which he was enveloped, but too plainly announced that little assistance was, in his present condition, to be expected from him.

« What remains for us to do? » she at length demanded of the seemingly insensible object of her concern.

« I would I knew! » he answered quickly, casting a keen but hurried glance around the whole horizon. « It is not improbable that they should reach the shore. Four-and-twenty hours of calm will assure it. »

« And if otherwise? »

« A blow at north-west, or from any quarter off the land, will prove their ruin. »

« But the ship? »

« If deserted, she must sink. »

« Then will I speak in your favour to these hearts of flint! I know not why I feel such interest in your welfare, inexplicable young man, but much would I suffer rather than believe that you incurred this peril. »

« Stop, dearest Madam, » said Wilder, respectfully arresting her movement with his hand. « I cannot leave the vessel. »

« We know not yet. The most stubborn natures may be subdued; even ignorance can be made to open its ears at the voice of entreaty. I may prevail. »

« There is one temper to be quelled—one reason to convince—one prejudice to conquer, over which you have no power. »

« Whose is that? »

« My own. »

« What mean you, sir? Surely you are not weak enough to suffer resentment against such beings to goad you to an act of madness? »

« Do I seem mad? » demanded Wilder. « The feeling by which I am governed may be false, but, such as it is, it is grafted on my habits, my opinions; I will say, my principles. Honour forbids me to quit a ship that I command, while a plank of her is afloat. »

« Of what use can a single arm prove at such a crisis? »

« None, » he answered, with a melancholy smile. « I must die, in order that others, who may be serviceable hereafter, should do their duty. »

Both Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude stood regarding his kindling eye, but otherwise placid countenance, with looks whose concern amounted to horror. The former read, in the very composure of his mien, the unalterable character of his resolution; and the latter, shuddering as the prospect of the cruel fate which awaited him crowded on her mind, felt a glow about her own youthful heart that almost tempted her to believe his self-devotion commendable. But the governess saw new reasons for apprehension in the determination of Wilder. If she had hitherto

felt reluctance to trust herself and her ward with a band such as that which now possessed the sole authority, it was more than doubly increased by the rude and noisy summons she received to hasten and take her place among them.

“Would to Heaven I knew in what manner to choose!” she exclaimed. “Speak to us, young man, as you would counsel mother and sister.”

“Were I so fortunate as to possess relatives so near and dear,” returned the other, with emphasis, “nothing should separate us at a time like this.”

“Is there hope for those who remain on the wreck?”

“But little.”

“And in the boat?”

It was near a minute before Wilder made any answer. He again turned his look around the bright and broad horizon, and he appeared to study the heavens, in the direction of the distant Continent, with infinite care. No omen that could indicate the probable character of the weather escaped his vigilance, while his

countenance reflected all the various emotions by which he was governed, as he gazed.

« As I am a man, Madam, » he answered with fervour, « and one who is bound not only to counsel but to protect your sex, I distrust the time. I think the chance of being seen by some passing sail equal to the probability that those who adventure in the pinnace will ever reach the land. »

« Then let us remain, » said Gertrude, the blood, for the first time since her re-appearance on deck, rushing into her colourless cheeks, until they appeared charged to fulness. « I like not the wretches who would be our companions in that boat. »

« Away, away ! » impatiently shouted Night-head. « Each minute of light is a week of life to us all, and every moment of calm, a year. Away, away, or we leave you ! »

Mrs Wyllys answered not, but she stood the image of doubt and painful indecision. Then the splash of oars was heard in the water, and at the next moment the pinnace was seen gliding over the element, impelled by the strong arms of six powerful rowers.

« Stay ! » shrieked the governess, no longer undetermined ; « receive my child, though you abandon me ! »

A wave of the hand, and an indistinct rumbling in the coarse tones of the mate, were the only answers given to her appeal. A long, deep, and breathing silence followed among the deserted. The grim countenances of the seamen in the pinnace soon became confused and indistinct ; and then the boat itself began to lessen on the eye, until it seemed no more than a dark and distant speck, rising and falling with the flow and reflux of the blue waters. During all this time, not even a whispered word was spoken. Each of the party gazed, until sight grew dim, at the receding object ; and it was only when his organs refused to convey the tiny image to his brain, that Wilder himself shook off the impression of the sort of trance into which he had fallen. His look became bent on his companions, and he pressed his hand upon his forehead, as though his brain were bewildered by the deep responsibility he had assumed in advising them to remain. But the sickening apprehension quickly passed

away, leaving in its place a firmer mind, and a resolution too often tried, in scenes of doubtful issue, to be long or easily shaken from its calmness and self-possession.

« They are gone ! » he exclaimed, breathing long and heavily, like one whose respiration had been unnaturally suspended.

« They are gone ! » echoed the governess, turning an eye, that was contracting with the intensity of her care, on the marble-like and motionless form of her pupil. « There is no longer any hope. »

The look that Wilder bestowed, on the same silent but lovely statue, was scarcely less expressive than the gaze of her who had nurtured the infancy of the Southern Heiress, in innocence and love. His brow grew thoughtful, and his lips became compressed, while all the resources of his fertile imagination and long experience gathered in his mind, in engrossing, intense reflection.

« Is there hope ? » demanded the governess, who was watching the change of his working countenance, with an attention that never swerved.

The gloom passed away from his swarthy features, and the smile that lighted them was like the radiance of the sun, as it breaks through the blackest vapours of the drifting gust.

«There is!» he said with firmness; «our case is far from desperate.»

«Then, may He who rules the ocean and the land receive the praise!» cried the grateful governess, giving vent to her long-suppressed agony in a flood of tears.

Gertrude cast herself upon the neck of Mrs Wyllys, and for a minute their unrestrained emotions were mingled.

«And now, my dearest Madam,» said Gertrude, leaving the arms of her governess, «let us trust to the skill of Mr Wilder; he has foreseen and foretold this danger; equally well may he predict our safety.»

«Foreseen and foretold!» returned the other, in a manner to shew that her faith in the professional prescience of the stranger was not altogether so unbounded as that of her more youthful and ardent companion. «No mortal could have foreseen this awful calamity; and least of all, foreseeing it, would he have sought

to incur its danger! Mr Wilder, I will not annoy you with requests for explanations that might now be useless, but you will not refuse to communicate your grounds of hope.»

Wilder hastened to relieve a curiosity that he well knew must be as painful as it was natural. The mutineers had left the largest, and much the safest, of the two boats belonging to the wreck, from a desire to improve the calm, well knowing that hours of severe labour would be necessary to launch it, from the place it occupied between the stumps of the two principal masts, into the ocean. This operation, which might have been executed in a few minutes with the ordinary purchases of the ship, would have required all their strength united, and that, too, to be exercised with a discretion and care that would have consumed too many of those moments which they rightly deemed to be so precious at that wild and unstable season of the year. Into this little ark Wilder proposed to convey such articles of comfort and necessity as he might hastily collect from the abandoned vessel; and then, entering it with his companions, to await the

critical instant when the wreck should sink from beneath them.

« Call you this hope? » exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, when his short explanation was ended, her cheek again blanching with disappointment. « I have heard that the gulf, which foundering vessels leave, swallows all lesser objects that are floating nigh! »

« It sometimes happens. For worlds I would not deceive you; and I now say that I think our chance for escape equal to that of being engulfed with the vessel. »

« This is terrible! » murmured the governess, « but the will of Heaven be done! Cannot ingenuity supply the place of strength, and the boat be cast from the decks before the fatal moment arrives? »

Wilder shook his head in an unequivocal negative.

« We are not so weak as you may think us, » said Gertrude. « Give a direction to our efforts, and let us see what may yet be done. Here is Cassandra, » she added—turning to the black girl already introduced to the reader, who stood behind her young and ardent

mistress, with the mantle and shawls of the latter thrown over her arm, as if about to attend her on an excursion for the morning—
« here is Cassandra, who alone has nearly the strength of a man. »

« Had she the strength of twenty, I should despair of launching the boat without the aid of machinery. But we lose time in words; I will go below, in order to judge of the probable duration of our doubt; and then to our preparations. Even you, fair and fragile as you seem, lovely being, may aid in the latter. »

He then pointed out such lighter objects as would be necessary to their comfort, should they be so fortunate as to get clear of the wreck, and advised their being put into the boat without delay. While the three females were thus usefully employed, he descended into the hold of the ship, in order to note the increase of the water, and make his calculations on the time that would elapse before the sinking fabric must entirely disappear. The fact proved their case to be more alarming than even Wilder had been led to expect. Stripped of her masts, the vessel had laboured so heavily

as to open many of her seams; and, as the upper works began to settle beneath the level of the ocean, the influx of the element was increasing with frightful rapidity. As the young mariner gazed about him with an understanding eye, he cursed, in the bitterness of his heart, the ignorance and superstition that had caused the desertion of the remainder of the crew. There existed, in reality, no evil that exertion and skill could not have remedied; but, deprived of all aid, he at once saw the folly of even attempting to procrastinate a catastrophe that was now unavoidable. Returning with a heavy heart to the deck, he immediately set about those dispositions which were necessary to afford them the smallest chance of escape.

While his companions deadened the sense of apprehension by their light but equally necessary employment, Wilder stepped the two masts of the boat, and properly disposed of the sails, and those other implements that might be useful in the event of success. Thus occupied, a couple of hours flew by, as though minutes were compressed into moments. At

the expiration of that period, his labour had ceased. He then cut the gripes that had kept the launch in its place when the ship was in motion, leaving it standing upright on its wooden beds, but in no other manner connected with the hull, which, by this time, had settled so low as to create the apprehension, that, at any moment, it might sink from beneath them. After this measure of precaution was taken, the females were summoned to the boat, lest the crisis might be nearer than he supposed; for he well knew that a foundering ship was, like a tottering wall, liable at any moment to yield to the impulse of the downward pressure. He then commenced the scarcely less necessary operation of selection among the chaos of articles with which the ill-directed zeal of his companions had so cumbered the boat, that there was hardly room left in which they might dispose of their more precious persons. Notwithstanding the often repeated and vociferous remonstrances of the negress, boxes, trunks, and packages flew from either side of the launch, as though Wilder had no consideration for the comfort and care of that fair

being in whose behalf Cassandra, unheeded, like her ancient namesake of Troy, lifted her voice so often in the tones of remonstrance. The boat was soon cleared of what, under their circumstances, was literally lumber; leaving, however, far more than enough to meet all their wants, and not a few of their comforts, in the event that the elements should accord the permission to use them.

Then, and not till then, did Wilder relax in his exertions. He had arranged his sails, ready to be hoisted in an instant; he had carefully examined that no straggling rope connected the boat to the wreck, to draw them under with the foundering mass; and he had assured himself that food, water, compass, and the imperfect instruments that were then in use to ascertain the position of a ship, were all carefully disposed of in their several places, and ready to his hand. When all was in this state of preparation, he disposed of himself in the stern of the boat, and endeavoured, by the composure of his manner, to inspire his less resolute companions with a portion of his own firmness.

The bright sun-shine was sleeping in a thousand places on every side of the silent and deserted wreck. The sea had subsided to such a state of utter rest, that it was only at long intervals that the huge and helpless mass on which the ark of the expectants lay was lifted from its dull quietude, to roll heavily, for a moment, in the washing waters, and then to settle lower into the greedy and absorbing element. Still the disappearance of the hull was slow, and even tedious, to those who looked forward with such impatience to its total immersion, as to the crisis of their own fortunes.

During these hours of weary and awful suspense, the discourse, between the watchers, though conducted in tones of confidence, and often of tenderness, was broken by long intervals of deep and musing silence. Each forbore to dwell upon the danger of their situation, in consideration of the feelings of the rest; but neither could conceal the imminent risk they ran, from that jealous watchfulness of love of life which was common to them all. In this manner, minutes, hours, and the day itself,

rolled by, and the darkness was seen stealing along the deep, gradually narrowing the boundary of their view towards the east, until the whole of the empty scene was limited to a little dusky circle around the spot on which they lay. To this change succeeded another fearful hour, during which it appeared that death was about to visit them, environed by its most revolting horrors. The heavy plunge of the wallowing whale, as he cast his huge form upon the surface of the sea, was heard, accompanied by the mimic blowings of a hundred imitators, that followed in the train of the monarch of the ocean. It appeared, to the alarmed and feverish imagination of Gertrude, that the brine was giving up all its monsters; and, notwithstanding the calm assurances of Wilder, that these accustomed sounds were rather the harbingers of peace than signs of any new danger, they filled her mind with images of the secret recesses over which they seemed suspended by a thread, and painted them replete with the disgusting inhabitants of the caverns of the great deep. The intelligent seaman himself was startled, when he saw, on the surface

of the water, the dark fins of the voracious shark stealing around the wreck, apprised, by his instinct, that the contents of the devoted vessel were shortly to become the prey of his tribe. Then came the moon, with its mild and deceptive light, to throw the delusion of its glow on the varying but ever frightful scene.

« See, » said Wilder, as the luminary lifted its pale and melancholy orb out of the bed of the ocean; « we shall have light for our hazardous launch ! »

« Is it at hand ? » demanded Mrs Wyllys, with all the resolution of manner she could assume in so trying a situation.

« It is — the ship has already brought her scuppers to the water. Sometimes a vessel will float until saturated with the brine. If ours sink at all, it will be soon. »

« If at all ! Is there then hope that she can float ? »

« None ! » said Wilder, pausing to listen to the hollow and threatening sounds which issued from the depths of the vessel, as the water broke through her divisions, in passing from side to side, and which sounded like the

groaning of some heavy monster in the last agony of nature. «None; she is already losing her level!»

His companions saw the change; but, not for the empire of the world, could either of them have uttered a syllable. Another low, threatening, rumbling sound was heard, and then the pent air beneath blew up the forward part of the deck, with an explosion like that of a gun.

«Now grasp the ropes I have given you!» cried Wilder, breathless with his eagerness to speak.

His words were smothered by the rushing and gurgling of waters. The vessel made a plunge like a dying whale; and, raising its stern high into the air, glided into the depths of the sea, like the leviathan seeking his secret places. The motionless boat was lifted with the ship, until it stood in an attitude fearfully approaching to the perpendicular. As the wreck descended, the bows of the launch met the element, burying themselves nearly to filling; but, buoyant and light, it rose again, and, struck powerfully on the stern by the settling mass,

the little ark shot ahead, as though it had been driven by the hand of man. Still, as the water rushed into the vortex, every thing within its influence yielded to the suction; and, at the next instant, the launch was seen darting down the declivity, as if eager to follow the vast machine, of which it had so long formed a dependant, through the same gaping whirlpool, to the bottom. Then it rose, rocking, to the surface; and, for a moment, was tossed and whirled like a bubble circling in the eddies of a pool. After which, the ocean moaned, and slept again; the moon-beams playing across its treacherous bosom, sweetly and calm, as the rays are seen to quiver on a lake that is embedded in sheltering mountains.

CHAPTER VIII.

—— “ Every day, some sailor's wife,
The masters of some merchant, and the merchant,
Have just our theme of woe.”

Tempest.

“ WE are safe ! ” said Wilder, who had stood, amid the violence of the struggle, with his person firmly braced against a mast, steadily watching the manner of their escape. “ Thus far, at least, are we safe ; for which may Heaven alone be praised, since no art of mine could avail us a feather. ”

The females had buried their faces in the folds of the vestments and clothes on which they were sitting ; nor did even the governess raise her countenance, until twice assured by her companion that the imminency of the risk was past. Another minute went by,

during which Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude were rendering their thanksgivings, in a manner and in words less equivocal than the expression which had just broken from the lips of the young seaman. When this grateful duty was performed, they stood erect, as if emboldened, by the offering, to look their situation more steadily in the face.

On every side lay the seemingly illimitable waste of waters. To them, their small and frail tenement was the world. So long as the ship, sinking and dangerous as she was, remained beneath them, there had appeared to be a barrier between their existence and the ocean. But one minute had deprived them of even this failing support, and they now found themselves cast upon the sea in a vessel that might be likened to one of the bubbles of the element. Gertrude felt, at that instant, as though she would have given half her hopes in life for the mere sight of that vast and nearly untenanted Continent which stretched for so many thousands of miles along the west, and kept the world of waters to their limits.

But the rush of emotions that so properly

belonged to their forlorn condition soon subsided, and their thoughts returned to the study of the means necessary to their further safety. Wilder had, however, anticipated these feelings; and, even before Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude had recovered their recollections, he was occupied, aided by the ready hands of the terrified but loquacious Cassandra, in arranging the contents of the boat in such a manner as would enable her to move through the element with the least possible resistance.

« With a well-trimmed ship, and a fair breeze, » cried our adventurer, cheerfully, so soon as his little job was ended, « we may yet hope to reach the land in one day and another night. I have seen the hour when, in this good launch, I would not have hesitated to run the length of the American coast, provided » — —

« You have forgotten your provided, » said Gertrude, observing that he hesitated, probably from a reluctance to express any exception to the opinion, which might increase the fears of his companions.

« Provided it were two months earlier in the year, » he added, in a tone of less confidence.

« The season is, then, against us: It only requires the greater resolution in ourselves! »

Wilder turned his head to regard the fair speaker, whose pale and placid countenance, as the moon silvered her fine features, expressed any thing but the courage to endure the hardships he so well knew she was liable to encounter, before they might hope to gain the Continent. After musing a moment, he lifted his open hand towards the south-west, and held its palm some little time to the air of the night.

« Any thing is better than idleness, for people in our condition, » he said. « There are some symptoms of the breeze coming in this quarter; I will be ready to meet it. »

He then spread his two lug-sails; and, trimming aft the sheets, placed himself at the helm, like one who expected his services there might be shortly needed. The result did not disappoint his expectations. Ere long, the light canvass of the boat began to flutter; and then, as he brought the bows in the proper direction, the little vessel commenced moving slowly along its blind and watery path.

The wind soon came fresher upon the sails, heavily charged with the dampness of the hour. Wilder urged the latter reason as a motive for the females to seek their rest beneath a little canopy of tarpaulings, which his foresight had also provided, and on mattresses he had brought from the ship. Perceiving that their protector wished to be alone, Mrs Wyllys and her pupil did as desired; and, in a few minutes, if not asleep, no one could have told that any other than our adventurer had possession of the solitary launch.

The middle hour of the night went by, without any material change in the prospects of those whose fate so much depended on the precarious influence of the weather. The wind had freshened to a smart breeze; and, by the calculations of Wilder, he had already moved across many leagues of ocean, directly in a line for the eastern end of that long and narrow isle that separates the waters which wash the shores of Connecticut from those of the open sea. The minutes flew swiftly by; for the time was propitious, and the thoughts of the young seaman were busy with the recol-

lections of a short but adventurous life. At moments he leaned forward, as if he would catch the gentle respiration of one who slept beneath the dark and rude canopy, and as though he might distinguish the soft breathings of her slumbers from those of her companions. Then would his form fall back into its seat, and his lip curl, or even move, as he gave inward utterance to the wayward fancies of his imagination. But at no time, not even in the midst of his greatest abandonment to reverie and thought, did he forget the constant, and nearly instinctive, duties of his station. A rapid glance at the heavens, an oblique look at the compass, and an occasional, but more protracted, examination of the pale face of the melancholy moon, were the usual directions taken by his practised eyes. The latter was still in the zenith; and his brow began again to contract, as he saw that she was shining through an atmosphere without a haze. He would have liked better to have seen even those portentous and watery circles by which she is so often environed, and which are thought to foretell the tempest, than the hard and dry medium

through which her beams fell so clear upon the face of the waters. The humidity with which the breeze had commenced was also gone; and, in its place, the quick, sensitive organs of the seaman detected the often grateful, though at that moment unwelcome, taint of the land. All these were signs that the airs from the Continent were about to prevail, and (as he dreaded, from certain wild-looking, long, narrow clouds, that were gathering over the western horizon) to prevail with a power conformable to the turbulent season of the year.

If any doubt had existed in the mind of Wilder as to the accuracy of his prognostics, it would have been solved about the commencement of the morning watch. At that hour the inconstant breeze began again to die; and, even before its last breathing was felt upon the flapping canvass, it was met by counter currents from the west. Our adventurer saw at once that the struggle was now truly to commence, and he made his dispositions accordingly. The square sheets of duck, which had so long been exposed to the mild airs of

the south, were reduced to one third their original size, by double reefs; and several of the more cumbrous of the remaining articles, such as were of doubtful use to persons in their situation, were cast, without pausing to hesitate, into the sea. Nor was this care without a sufficient object. The air soon came sighing heavily over the deep from the north-west, bringing with it the chilling asperity of the inhospitable regions of the Canadas.

“Ah! well do I know you,” muttered Wilder, as the first puff of this unwelcome wind struck his sails, and forced the little boat to bend to its power in passing; “well do I know you, with your fresh-water flavour and your smell of the land! Would to God you had blown your fill upon the lakes, without coming down to drive many a weary seaman back upon his wake, and to eke out a voyage, already too long, by your bitter colds and steady obstinacy!”

“Do you speak?” said Gertrude, half appearing from beneath her canopy, and then shrinking back, shivering, into its cover again, as she felt the influence in the change of air.

“Sleep, Lady, sleep,” he answered, as though

he liked not, at such a moment, to be disturbed by even her soft and silvery voice.

« Is there new danger? » asked the maiden, stepping lightly from the mattress, as if she would not disturb the repose of her governess. « You need not fear to tell me the worst: I am a soldier's child! »

He pointed to the signs so well comprehended by himself, but continued silent.

« I feel that the wind is colder than it was, » she said, « but I see no other change. »

« And do you know whither the boat is going? »

« To the land, I think. You assured us of that, and I do not believe you would willingly deceive. »

« You do me justice; and, as a proof of it, I will now tell you that you are mistaken. I know that to your eyes all points of the compass, on this void, must seem the same; but I cannot thus easily deceive myself. »

« And we are not sailing for our homes? »

« So far from it, that, should this course continue, we must cross the whole Atlantic before your eyes could again see land. »

Gertrude made no reply, but retired, in sorrow, to the side of her governess. In the mean time, Wilder, again left to himself, began to consult his compass and the direction of the wind. Perceiving that he might approach nearer to the continent of America by changing the position of the boat, he wore round, and brought its head as nigh up to the south-west as the wind would permit.

But there was little hope in this trifling change. At each minute, the power of the breeze was increasing, until it soon freshened to a degree that compelled him to furl his after-sail. The slumbering ocean was not long in awakening; and, by the time the launch was snug under a close-reefed fore-sail, the boat was rising on dark and ever-growing waves, or sinking into the momentary calm of deep furrows, whence it rose again, to feel the rapidly increasing power of the blasts. The dashing of the waters, and the rushing of the wind, which now began to sweep heavily across the blue waste, quickly drew the females to the side of our adventurer. To their hurried and anxious questions he made considerate

but brief replies, like a man who felt that the time was far better suited to action than to words.

In this manner the last lingering minutes of the night went by, loaded with a care that each moment rendered heavier, and which each successive freshening of the breeze had a tendency to render doubly anxious. The day came, only to bestow more distinctness on the cheerless prospect. The waves were looking green and angrily, while, here and there, large crests of foam were beginning to break on their summits — the certain evidence that a conflict betwixt the elements was at hand. Then came the sun over the ragged margin of the eastern horizon, climbing slowly into the blue arch above, which lay clear, chilling, distinct, and entirely without a cloud.

Wilder noted all these changes of the hour with a closeness that proved how critical he deemed their case. He seemed rather to consult the signs of the heavens than to regard the tossings and rushings of the water, which dashed against the side of his little vessel in a manner that, to the eyes of his companions, often

appeared to threaten their total destruction. To the latter he was too much accustomed, to anticipate the true moment of alarm, though to less instructed senses it might already seem so dangerous. It was to him as is the thunder, when compared to the lightning, in the mind of the philosopher; or rather he knew, that, if harm might come from the one on which he floated, its ability to injure must first be called into action by the power of the sister element.

« What think you of our case now? » asked Mrs Wyllys, keeping her look closely fastened on his countenance, as if she would rather trust its expression, than even to his words for the answer.

« So long as the wind continues thus, we may yet hope to keep within the route of ships to and from the great northern ports; but, if it freshen to a gale, and the sea begin to break with violence, I doubt the ability of this boat to lie-to.»

« Then our resource must be in endeavouring to run before the gale. »

« Then must we scud. »

“What would be our direction, in such an event?” demanded Gertrude, to whose mind, in the agitation of the ocean and the naked view on every hand, all idea of places and distances was lost, in the most inextricable confusion.

“In such an event,” returned our adventurer, regarding her with a look in which commiseration and indefinite concern were so singularly mingled, that her own mild gaze was changed into a timid and furtive glance, “in such an event, we should be leaving that land it is so important to reach.”

“What ’em ’ere?” cried Cassandra, whose large dark eyes were rolling on every side of her, with a curiosity that no care or sense of danger could extinguish; “’em berry big fish on a water?”

“It is a boat!” cried Wilder, springing upon a thwart, to catch a glimpse of a dark object that was driving on the glittering crest of a wave, within a hundred feet of the spot where the launch itself was struggling through the brine. “What ho!—boat, ahoy!—holloa there!—boat, ahoy!”

The deep breathing of the wind swept by them, but no human sound responded to his shout. They had already fallen, between two seas, into a deep vale of water, where the narrow view extended no farther than the dark and rolling barriers on either side.

« Merciful Providence ! » exclaimed the governess, « can there be others as unhappy as ourselves ! »

« It was a boat, or my sight is not true as usual, » returned Wilder, still keeping his stand, to watch the moment when he might catch another view. His wish was quickly realised. He had trusted the helm, for the moment, to the hands of Cassandra, who suffered the launch to vary a little from its course. The words were still on his lips, when the same black object came sweeping down the wave to windward, and a pinnacle, bottom upwards, washed past them in the trough. Then followed a shriek from the negress, who abandoned the tiller, and, sinking on her knees, hid her face in her hands. Wilder instinctively caught the helm, as he bent his face in the direction whence the revolting eye of Cassandra had

been turned. A grim human form was seen, erect, and half exposed, advancing in the midst of the broken crest which was still covering the dark declivity to windward with foam. For a moment, it stood with the brine dripping from the drenched locks, like some being that had issued from the deep to turn its frightful features on the spectators; and then the lifeless body of a drowned man drove past the launch, which, at the next minute, rose to the summit of the wave, to sink into another vale, where no such terrifying object floated.

Not only Wilder, but Gertrude and Mrs Wyllys, had seen this startling spectacle so nigh them as to recognise the countenance of Night-head, rendered still more stern and forbidding than ever, in the impression left by death. But neither spoke, nor gave any other evidence of their intelligence. Wilder hoped that his companions had at least escaped the shock of recognising the victim; and the females themselves saw, in the hapless fortune of the mutineer, too much of their own probable though more protracted fate, to be able to give vent to the horror each felt so deeply, in

words. For some time, the elements alone were heard sighing a sort of hoarse requiem over the victims of their conflict.

« The pinnacle has filled ! » Wilder at length observed, when he saw, by the pallid features and meaning eyes of his companions, it was in vain to affect reserve on the subject any longer. « Their boat was frail, and loaded to the water's edge. »

« Think you all are lost ? » observed Mrs Wyllys, in a voice that scarcely amounted to a whisper.

« There is no hope for any ! Gladly would I part with an arm, for the assistance of the poorest of those misguided seamen, who have hurried on their evil fortune by their own disobedience and ignorance. »

« And, of all the happy and thoughtless human beings who lately left the harbour of Newport, in a vessel that has so long been the boast of mariners, we alone remain ! »

« There is not another : This boat, and its contents, are the sole memorials of the 'Royal Caroline !' »

« It was not within the ken of human

knowledge to foresee this evil, » continued the governess, fastening her eye on the countenance of Wilder, as though she would ask a question which conscience told her, at the same time, betrayed a portion of that very superstition which had hastened the fate of the rude being they had so lately passed.

« It was not. »

« And the danger, to which you so often and so inexplicably alluded, had no reference to this we have incurred? »

« It had not. »

« It has gone, with the change in our situation? »

« I hope it has. »

« See! » interrupted Gertrude, laying a hand, in her haste, on the arm of Wilder. « Heaven be praised! yonder is something at last to relieve the view. »

« It is a ship! » exclaimed her governess; but, an envious wave lifting its green side between them and the object, they sunk into a trough, as though the vision had been placed momentarily before their eyes, merely to taunt them with its image. The quick glance of

Wilder had caught, however, a glimpse of the tracery against the heavens, as they descended. When the boat rose again, his look was properly directed, and he was enabled to be certain of the reality of the vessel. Wave succeeded wave, and moments followed moments, during which the stranger was given to their gaze, and as often disappeared, as the launch unavoidably fell into the troughs of the seas. These short and hasty glimpses sufficed, however, to convey all that was necessary to the eye of a man who had been nurtured on that element, where circumstances now exacted of him such constant and unequivocal evidences of his skill.

At the distance of a mile, there was in fact a ship to be seen, rolling and pitching gracefully, and without any apparent effort, on those waves through which the launch was struggling with such difficulty. A solitary sail was set, to steady the vessel, and that so reduced, by reefs, as to look like a little snowy cloud amid the dark maze of rigging and spars. At times, her long and tapering masts appeared pointing to the zenith, or even rolling as if

inclining against the wind; and then, again, with slow and graceful sweeps, they seemed to fall towards the ruffled surface of the ocean, as though about to seek refuge from their endless motion, in the bosom of the agitated element itself. There were moments when the long, low, and black hull was seen distinctly resting on the summit of a sea, and glittering in the sun-beams, as the water washed from her sides; and then, as boat and vessel sunk together, all was lost to the eye, even to the attenuated lines of her tallest and most delicate spars.

Both Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude bowed their faces to their knees, when assured of the truth of their hopes, and poured out their gratitude in silent and secret thanksgivings. The joy of Cassandra was more clamorous, and less restrained. The simple negress laughed, shed tears, and exulted in the most touching manner, on the prospect that was now offered for the escape of her young mistress and herself from a death that the recent sight had set before her imagination in the most frightful form. But no answering look of congratulation was

to be traced in the contracting and anxious eye of their companion.

« Now, » said Mrs Wyllys, seizing his hand in both her own, « may we hope to be delivered; and then shall we be allowed, brave and excellent young man, some opportunity of proving to you how highly we esteem your services. »

Wilder permitted the burst of her feelings with a species of bewildered care, but he neither spoke, nor in any other manner exhibited the smallest sympathy in her joy.

« Surely you are not grieved, Mr Wilder, » added the wondering Gertrude, « that the prospect of escape from these awful waves is at length so mercifully held forth to us ! »

« I would gladly die to shelter you from harm, » returned the young sailor ; « but » —

« This is not a time for any thing but gratitude and rejoicing, » interrupted the governess ; « I cannot hearken to any cold exceptions now ; what mean you with that ‘ but ? ’ »

« It may be not so easy as you think to reach yon ship — the gale may prevent — in short, many is the vessel that is seen at sea which cannot be spoken. »

« Happily, such is not our cruel fortune. I understand, considerate and generous youth, your wish to dampen hopes that may possibly be yet thwarted; but I have too long, and too often, trusted this dangerous element, not to know that he who has the wind can speak, or not, as he pleases. »

« You are right in saying we are to windward, Madam; and, were I in a ship, nothing would be easier than to run within hail of the stranger. — That ship is certainly lying-to, and yet the gale is not fresh enough to bring so stout a vessel to so short canvass. »

« They see us, then, and await our arrival. »

« No, no: Thank God, we are not yet seen! This little rag of ours is blended with the spray. They take it for a gull, or a comb of the sea, for the moment it is in view.

« And do you thank Heaven for this! » exclaimed Gertrude, regarding the anxious Wilder with a wonder that her more cautious governess had the power to restrain.

« Did I thank Heaven for not being seen! I may have mistaken the object of my thanks: It is an armed ship! »

« Perhaps a cruiser of the King's ! We are the more likely to meet with a welcome reception ! Delay not to hoist some signal, lest they increase their sail, and leave us. »

« You forget that the enemy is often found upon our coast. This might prove a Frenchman ! »

« I have no fears of a generous enemy. Even a pirate would give shelter, and welcome, to females in such distress. »

A long and profound silence succeeded. Wilder still stood upon the thwart, straining his eyes to read each sign that a seaman understands ; nor did he appear to find much pleasure in the task.

« We will drift ahead, » he said, « and, as the ship is lying on a different tack, we may yet gain a position that will leave us masters of our future movements. »

To this his companions knew not well how to make any objections. Mrs. Wyllys was so much struck with the remarkable air of coldness with which he met this prospect of refuge against the forlorn condition in which he had just before confessed they were placed, that

she was much more disposed to ponder on the cause, than to trouble him with questions which she had the discernment to see would be useless. Gertrude wondered, while she was disposed to think he might be right, though she knew not why. Cassandra alone was rebellious. She lifted her voice in loud objections against a moment's delay, assuring the abstracted and perfectly inattentive young seaman, that, should any evil come to her young mistress by his obstinacy, General Grayson would be angered; and then she left him to reflect on the results of a displeasure that to her simple mind teemed with all the danger that could attend the anger of a monarch. Provoked by his contumacious disregard of her remonstrances, the negress, forgetting all her respect, in blindness in behalf of her whom she not only loved, but had been taught to reverence, seized the boat-hook, and, unperceived by Wilder, fastened to it, with dexterity, one of the linen cloths that had been brought from the wreck, and exposed it, far above the diminished sail, for a couple of minutes, ere her device had caught the eyes of either of her companions. Then, indeed, she

lowered the signal, in haste, before the dark and frowning look of Wilder. But, short as was the triumph of the negress, it was crowned with complete success.

The restrained silence, which is so apt to succeed a sudden burst of displeasure, was still reigning in the boat, when a cloud of smoke broke out of the side of the ship, as she lay on the summit of a wave; and then came the deadened roar of artillery, struggling heavily up against the wind.

“It is now too late to hesitate,” said Mrs Wyllys; “we are seen, let the stranger be friend or enemy.”

Wilder did not answer, but continued to profit, by each opportunity, to watch the movements of the stranger. In another moment, the spars were seen receding from the breeze, and, in a couple of minutes more, the head of the ship was changed to the direction in which they lay. Then appeared four or five broader sheets of canvass in different parts of the complicated machinery, while the vessel bowed to the gale, as though she inclined still lower before its power. At moments, as she mounted

on a sea, her bows seemed issuing from the element altogether, and high jets of spray were cast into the air, glittering in the sun, as the white particles scattered in the breeze, or fell in gems upon the sails and rigging.

« It is now too late, indeed ; » murmured our adventurer, bearing up the helm of his own little craft, and letting its sheet glide through his hands, until the sail was bagging with the breeze nearly to bursting. The boat, which had so long been labouring through the water, with a wish to cling as nigh as possible to the Continent, flew over the seas, leaving a long trail of foam behind it ; and, before either of the females had regained their entire self-possession, she was floating in the comparative calm that was created by the hull of a large vessel. A light active form stood in the rigging of the ship, issuing the necessary orders to a hundred seamen ; and, in the midst of the confusion and alarm that such a scene was likely to cause in the bosom of woman, Gertrude and Mrs Wyllys, with their two companions, were transferred in safety to the decks of the stranger. The moment they

and their effects were secured, the launch was cut adrift, like useless lumber. Twenty mariners were then seen climbing among the ropes; and sail after sail was opened still wider, until, bearing the vast folds of all her canvass spread, the vessel was urged along the trackless course, like a swift cloud drifting through the thin medium of the upper air.

CHAPTER IX.

« Now let it work : Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take then what course thou wilt! »

Shakspeare.

WHEN the velocity with which the vessel flew before the wind is properly considered, the reader will not be surprised to learn, that, with the change of a week in the time from that with which the foregoing incidents close, we are enabled to open the scene of the present chapter in a very different quarter of the same sea. It is unnecessary to follow the 'Rover' in the windings of that devious and apparently often uncertain course, during which his keel furrowed more than a thousand miles of ocean, and during which more than one cruiser of the King was skilfully eluded, and sundry less

dangerous rencounters avoided, as much from inclination as any other visible cause. It is quite sufficient for our purpose to lift the curtain, which must conceal her movements for a time, to expose the gallant vessel in a milder climate, and, when the season of the year is considered, in a more propitious sea.

Exactly seven days after Gertrude and her governess became the inmates of a ship whose character it is no longer necessary to conceal from the reader, the sun rose upon her flapping sails, symmetrical spars, and dark hull, within sight of a few, low, small and rocky islands. The colour of the element would have told a seaman, had no mound of blue land been seen issuing out of the world of waters, that the bottom of the sea was approaching nigher than common to its surface, and that it was necessary to guard against the well-known and dreaded dangers of the coast. Wind there was none; for the vacillating and uncertain air which, from time to time, distended for an instant the lighter canvass of the vessel, deserved to be merely termed the breathings of a morning, which was breaking upon the

main, soft, mild, and seemingly so bland as to impart to the ocean the placid character of a sleeping lake.

Every thing having life in the ship was already up and stirring. Fifty stout and healthy-looking seamen were hanging in different parts of her rigging, some laughing, and holding low converse with messmates who lay indolently on the neighbouring spars, and others leisurely performing the light and trivial duty that was the ostensible employment of the moment. More than as many others loitered carelessly about the decks below, somewhat similarly engaged; the whole wearing much the appearance of men who were set to perform certain immaterial tasks, more to escape the imputation of idleness than from any actual necessity that the same should be executed. The quarter-deck, the hallowed spot of every vessel that may pretend to either discipline or its semblance, was differently occupied, though by a set of beings who could lay no greater claim to activity or interest. In short, the vessel partook of the character of the ocean and of the weather, both of which seemed re-

serving their powers to some more suitable occasion for their display.

Three or four young (and, considering the nature of their service, far from unpleasant-looking) men appeared in a sort of undress nautical uniform, in which the fashion of no people in particular was very studiously consulted. Notwithstanding the apparent calm that reigned on all around them, each of these individuals bore a short straight dirk at his girdle; and, as one of them bent over the side of the vessel, the handle of a little pistol was discovered through an opening in the folds of his professional frock. There were, however, no other immediate signs of distrust, whence an observer might infer that this armed precaution was more than the usual custom of the vessel. A couple of grim and callous looking sentinels, who were attired and accoutred like soldiers of the land, and who, contrary to marine usage, were posted on the line which separated the resorting place of the officers from the forward part of the deck, bespoke additional caution. But, still, all these arrangements were regarded by the seamen with

incurious eyes — a certain proof that use had long rendered them familiar.

The individual who has been introduced to the reader under the high-sounding title of 'General,' stood upright and rigid as one of the masts of the ship, studying, with a critical eye, the equipments of his two mercenaries, and apparently as regardless of what was passing around him as though he literally considered himself a fixture in the vessel. One form, however, was to be distinguished from all around it, by the dignity of its mien and the air of authority that breathed even in the repose of its attitude. It was the Rover, who stood alone, none presuming to approach the spot where he had chosen to plant his light but graceful and imposing person. There was ever an expression of stern investigation in his quick wandering eye, as it roved from object to object in the equipment of the vessel; and at moments, as his look appeared fastened on some one of the light fleecy clouds that floated in the blue vacuum above him, there gathered about his brow a gloom like that which is thought to be the shadowing of intense

thought. Indeed, so dark and threatening did this lowering of the eye become, at times, that the fair hair which broke out in ringlets from beneath a black velvet sea-cap, from whose top depended a tassel of gold, could no longer impart to his countenance the gentleness which it sometimes was seen to express. As though he disdained concealment, and wished to announce the nature of the power he wielded, he wore his pistols openly in a leathern belt, that was made to cross a frock of blue, delicately edged with gold, and through which he had thrust, with the same disregard of concealment, a light and curved Turkish yattagan, with a straight stiletto, which, by the chasings of its handle, had probably originally come from the manufactory of some Italian artisan.

On the deck of the poop, overlooking the rest, and retired from the crowd beneath them, stood Mrs Wyllys and her charge, neither of whom announced in the slightest degree, by eye or air, that anxiety which might readily be supposed natural to females who found themselves in a condition so critical as in the company of lawless freebooters. On the con-

trary, while the former pointed out to the latter the hillock of pale blue which rose from the water, like a dark and strongly defined cloud in the distance, hope was strongly blended with the ordinarily placid expression of her features. She also called to Wilder, in a cheerful voice; and the youth, who had long been standing, with a sort of jealous watchfulness, at the foot of the ladder which led from the quarter-deck, was at her side in an instant.

« I am telling Gertrude, » said the governess, with those tones of confidence which had been created by the dangers they had incurred together, « that yonder is her home, and that, when the breeze shall be felt, we may speedily hope to reach it; but the wilfully timid girl insists that she cannot believe her senses, after the frightful risks we have run, until, at least, she shall see the dwelling of her childhood, and the face of her father. You have often been on this coast before, Mr Wilder? »

« Often, Madam. »

« Then, you can tell us what is the distant land we see. »

« Land! » repeated our adventurer, affecting

a look of surprise; « is there then land in view? »

« Is there land in view! Have not hours gone by since the same was proclaimed from the masts? »

« It may be so : We seamen are dull after a night of watching, and often hear but little of that which passes. »

There was a quick, suspicious glance from the eye of the governess, as if she apprehended, she knew not what, ere she continued,—

« Has the sight of the cheerful, blessed soil of America so soon lost its charm in your eye, that you approach it with an air so heedless? The infatuation of men of your profession, in favour of so dangerous and so treacherous an element, is an enigma I never could explain. »

« Do seamen, then, love their calling with so devoted an affection? » demanded Gertrude, in a haste that she might have found embarrassing to explain.

« It is a folly of which we are often accused, » rejoined Wilder, turning his eye on the speaker, and smiling in a manner that had lost every shade of reserve.

« And justly ? »

« I fear, justly. »

« Ay ! » exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, with an emphasis that was remarkable for the tone of soft and yet bitter regret with which it was uttered ; « often better than their quiet and peaceful homes ! »

Gertrude pursued the idea no further ; but her fine full eye fell upon the deck, as though she reflected deeply on a perversity of taste which could render man so insensible to domestic pleasures, and incline him to court the wild dangers of the ocean.

« I, at least, am free from the latter charge, » exclaimed Wilder : « To me a ship has always been a home. »

« And much of my life, too, has been wasted in one, » continued the governess, who evidently was pursuing, in the recesses of her own mind, some images of a time long past. « Happy and miserable, alike, have been the hours that I have passed upon the sea ! Nor is this the first King's ship in which it has been my fortune to be thrown. And yet the customs seem changed since those days I mention ; or else

memory is beginning to lose some of the impressions of an age when memory is apt to be most tenacious. Is it usual, Mr Wilder, to admit an utter stranger, like yourself, to exercise authority in a vessel of war?"

"Certainly not."

"And yet have you been acting, as far as my weak judgment teaches, as second here, since the moment we entered this vessel, wrecked and helpless fugitives from the waves."

Our adventurer again averted his eye, and evidently searched for words, ere he replied,—

"A commission is always respected: Mine procured for me the consideration you have witnessed."

"You are then an officer of the Crown?"

"Would any other authority be respected in a vessel of the Crown? Death had left a vacancy in the second station of this—cruiser. Fortunately for the wants of the service, perhaps for myself, I was at hand to fill it."

"But, tell me farther," continued the governess, who appeared disposed to profit by the occasion to solve more doubts than one, "is it usual for the officers of a vessel of war

to appear armed among their crew, in the manner I see here?»

« It is the pleasure of our Commander. »

« That Commander is evidently a skilful seaman, but one whose caprices and tastes are as extraordinary as I find his mien. I have surely seen him before ; and, it would seem, but lately. »

Mrs Wyllys then became silent for several minutes. During the whole time, her eye never averted its gaze from the form of the calm and motionless being, who still maintained his attitude of repose, aloof from all that throng whom he had the address to make so entirely dependant on his authority. It seemed, for these few minutes, that the organs of the governess drunk in the smallest peculiarity of his person, and as if they would never tire of their gaze. Then, drawing a heavy and relieving breath, she once more remembered that she was not alone, and that others were silently, but observantly, awaiting the operation of her secret thoughts. Without manifesting any embarrassment, however, at an absence of mind that was far too common to surprise her pupil, the governess resumed the discourse

where she had herself dropped it, bending her look again on Wilder.

« Is Captain Heidegger, then, long of your acquaintance ? » she demanded.

« We have met before. »

« It should be a name of German origin, by the sound. Certain I am that it is new to me. The time has been when few officers, of his rank, in the service of the King, were unknown to me, at least in name. Is his family of long standing in England ? »

« That is a question he may better answer himself, » said Wilder, glad to perceive that the subject of their discourse was approaching them, with the air of one who felt that none in that vessel might presume to dispute his right to mingle in any discourse that should please his fancy. « For the moment, Madam, my duty calls me elsewhere. »

Wilder evidently withdrew with reluctance; and, had suspicion been active in the breasts of either of his companions, they would not have failed to note the glance of distrust with which he watched the manner that his Commander assumed in paying the salutations of

the morning. There was nothing, however, in the air of the Rover that should have given ground to such jealous vigilance. On the contrary, his manner, for the moment, was cold and abstracted, and he appeared to mingle in their discourse, much more from a sense of the obligations of hospitality, than from any satisfaction that he might have been thought to derive from the intercourse. Still, his deportment was kind, and his voice bland as the airs that were wafted from the healthful islands in view.

“There is a sight”—he said, pointing towards the low blue ridges of the land—“that forms the landsman’s delight, and the seaman’s terror.”

“Are, then, seamen thus averse to the view of regions where so many millions of their fellow creatures find pleasure in dwelling?” demanded Gertrude, (to whom he more particularly addressed his words), with a frankness that would, in itself, have sufficiently proved no glimmerings of his real character had ever dawned on her own spotless and unsuspecting mind.

“Miss Grayson included,” he returned, with

a slight bow, and a smile, in which, perhaps, irony was concealed by playfulness. « After the risk you have so lately run, even I, confirmed and obstinate sea-monster as I am, have no reason to complain of your distaste for our element. And yet, you see, it is not entirely without its charms. No lake, that lies within the limits of yon Continent, can be more calm and sweet than is this bit of ocean. Were we a few degrees more southward, I would shew you landscapes of rock and mountain — of bays, and hill-sides sprinkled with verdure — of tumbling whales, and lazy fishermen, and distant cottages, and lagging sails — such as would make a figure even in pages that the bright eye of lady might love to read. »

« And yet for most of this would you be indebted to the land. In return for your picture, I would take you north, and shew you black and threatening clouds — a green and angry sea — shipwrecks and shoals — cottages, hill-sides, and mountains, in the imagination only of the drowning man — and sails bleached by waters that contain the voracious shark, or the disgusting polypus. »

Gertrude had answered in his own vein; but it was too evident, by her pale cheek, and a slight tremour about her full, rich lip, that memory was also busy with its frightful images. The quick-searching eye of the Rover was not slow to detect the change. As though he would banish every recollection that might give her pain, he artfully, but delicately, gave a new direction to the discourse.

« There are people who think the sea has no amusements, » he said. « To a pining, homesick, sea-sick miserable, this may well be true; but the man who has spirit enough to keep down the qualms of the animal may tell a different tale. We have our balls regularly, for instance; and there are artists on board this ship, who, though they cannot, perhaps, make as accurate a right angle with their legs as the first dancer of a leaping ballet, can go through their figures in a gale of wind; which is more than can be said of the highest jumper of them all on shore. »

« A ball, without females, would, at least, be thought an unsocial amusement, with us uninstructed people of terra firma. »

« Hum! It might be better for a lady or two. Then, have we our theatre: Farce, comedy, and the buskin, take their turns to help along the time. Yon fellow, that you see lying on the fore-topsail-yard, like an indolent serpent basking on the branch of a tree, will 'roar you as gently as any sucking dove!' And here is a votary of Momus, who would raise a smile on the lips of a sea-sick friar: I believe I can say no more in his commendation.»

«All this is well in the description,» returned Mrs Wyllys; «but something is due to the merit of the—poet, or, painter shall I term you?»

«Neither, but a grave and veritable chronologer. However, since you doubt, and since you are so new to the ocean» —

«Pardon me!» the lady gravely interrupted. «I am, on the contrary, one who has seen much of it.»

The Rover, who had rather suffered his unsettled glances to wander over the youthful countenance of Gertrude than towards her companion, now bent his eyes on the last speaker, where he kept them fastened so long

as to create some little embarrassment in the subject of his gaze.

« You seem surprised that the time of a female should have been thus employed, » she observed, with a view to arouse his attention to the impropriety of his observation.

« We were speaking of the sea, if I remember, » he continued, like a man that was suddenly awakened from a deep reverie. « Ay, I know it was of the sea ; for I had grown boastful in my panegyrics : I had told you that this ship was faster than » —

« Nothing ! » exclaimed Gertrude, laughing at his blunder. « You were playing Master of Ceremonies at a nautical ball ! »

« Will you figure in a minuet ? Shall I honour my boards with the graces of your person ? »

« Me, sir ? and with whom ? the gentleman who knows so well the manner of keeping his feet in a gale ? »

« You were about to relieve any doubts we might have concerning the amusements of seamen, » said the governess, reproving the too playful spirit of her pupil, by a glance of her own grave eye.

“ Ay, it was the humour of the moment, nor will I balk it. ”

He then turned towards Wilder, who had posted himself within ear-shot of what was passing, and continued,—

“ These ladies doubt our gaiety, Mr Wilder. Let the boatswain give the magical wind of his call, and pass the word ‘ To mischief ’ among the people. ”

Our adventurer bowed his acquiescence, and issued the necessary order. In a few moments, the precise individual who has already made acquaintance with the reader, in the bar-room of the ‘ Foul Anchor,’ appeared in the centre of the vessel, near the main hatchway, decorated, as before, with his silver chain and whistle, and accompanied by two mates, who were humbler scholars of the same gruff school. Then rose a long, shrill whistle from the instrument of Nightingale, who, when the sound had died away on the ear, uttered, in his deepest and least sonorous tones,—

“ All hands to mischief, ahoy ! ”

We have before had occasion to liken these sounds to the muttering of a bull, nor shall we

at present see fit to disturb the comparison, since no other similitude, so apt, presents itself. The example of the boatswain was followed by each of his mates in turn, and then the summons was deemed sufficient. However unintelligible and grum the call might sound in the musical ears of Gertrude, they produced no unpleasant effects on the organs of a majority of those who heard them. When the first swelling and protracted note of the call mounted on the still air, each idle and extended young seaman, as he lay stretched upon a spar, or hung dangling from a ratling, lifted his head, to catch the words that were to follow, as an obedient spaniel pricks his ears to catch the tones of his master. But no sooner had the emphatic word, which preceded the long-drawn and customary exclamation with which Nightingale closed his summons, been pronounced, than the low murmur of voices, which had so long been maintained among the men, broke out in a simultaneous and common shout. In an instant, every symptom of lethargy disappeared in a general and extraordinary activity. The young and nimble topmen bounded, like

leaping animals, into the rigging of their respective masts, and were seen ascending the shaking ladders of ropes as so many squirrels would hasten to their holes at the signal of alarm. The graver and heavier seamen of the forecastle, the still more important quarter-gunners and quarter-masters, the less instructed and half-startled waisters, and the raw and actually alarmed after-guard, all hurried, by a sort of instinct, to their several points; the more practised to plot mischief against their shipmates, and the less intelligent to concert their means of defence.

In an instant, the tops and yards were ringing with laughter and loudly-uttered jokes, as each exulting mariner aloft proclaimed his device to his fellows, or urged his own inventions, at the expense of some less ingenious mode of annoyance. On the other hand, the distrustful and often repeated glances that were thrown upward, from the men who had clustered on the quarter-deck and around the foot of the mainmast, sufficiently proclaimed the diffidence with which the novices on deck were about to enter into the contest of practical wit

that was about to commence. The steady and more earnest seamen forward, however, maintained their places, with a species of stern resolution which manifestly proved the reliance they had on their physical force, and their long familiarity with all the humours, no less than with the dangers, of the ocean.

There was another little cluster of men, who assembled, in the midst of the general clamour and confusion, with a haste and steadiness that announced, at the same time, both a consciousness of the entire necessity of unity on the present occasion, and the habit of acting in concert. These were the drilled and military dependants of the General, between whom, and the less artificial seamen, there existed not only an antipathy that might almost be called instinctive, but which, for obvious reasons, had been so strongly encouraged in the vessel of which we write, as often to manifest itself in turbulent and nearly mutinous broils. About twenty in number, they collected quickly; and, although obliged to dispense with their fire-arms in such an amusement, there was a sternness, in the visage of each of the whiskered

worthies, that shewed how readily he could appeal to the bayonet that was suspended from his shoulder, should need demand it. Their Commander himself withdrew, with the rest of the officers, to the poop, in order that no incumbrance might be given, by their presence, to the freedom of the sports to which they had resigned the rest of the vessel.

A couple of minutes might have been lost in producing the different changes we have just related. But, so soon as the topmen were sure that no unfortunate laggard of their party was within reach of the resentment of the different groupes beneath, they commenced complying literally with the summons of the boatswain, by plotting mischief.

Sundry buckets, most of which had been provided for the extinction of fire, were quickly seen pendant from as many whips on the outer extremity of the different yards descending towards the sea. In spite of the awkward opposition of the men below, these leathern vessels were speedily filled, and in the hands of those who had sent them down. Many was the gaping waister, and rigid marine, who now

made a more familiar acquaintance with the element on which he floated than suited either his convenience or his humour. So long as the jokes were confined to these semi-initiated individuals, the topmen enjoyed their fun with impunity; but, the instant the dignity of a quarter-gunner's person was invaded, the whole gang of petty officers and forecastle-men rose in a body to meet the insult, with a readiness and dexterity that manifested how much at home the elder mariners were with all that belonged to their art. A little engine was transferred to the head, and was then brought to bear on the nearest top, like a well-planted battery clearing the way for the opening battle. The laughing and chattering topmen were soon dispersed: some ascending beyond the power of the engine, and others retreating into the neighbouring top, along ropes, and across giddy heights, that would have seemed impracticable to any animal less agile than a squirrel.

The marines were now summoned, by the successful and malicious mariners, forward, to improve their advantage. Thoroughly drenched already, and eager to resent their wrongs, a

half-dozen of the soldiers, led on by a corporal, the coating of whose powdered poll had been converted into a sort of paste by too great an intimacy with a bucket of water, essayed to mount the rigging; an exploit to them much more arduous than to enter a breach. The waggish quarter-gunners and quarter-masters, satisfied with their own success, stimulated them to the enterprise; and Nightingale and his mates, while they rolled their tongues into their cheeks, gave forth, with their whistles, the cheering sound of 'heave away!' The sight of these adventurers, slowly and cautiously mounting the rigging, acted very much, on the scattered topmen, in the manner that the appearance of so many flies, in the immediate vicinity of a web, is known to act on their concealed and rapacious enemies. The sailors aloft saw, by expressive glances from them below, that a soldier was considered legal game. No sooner, therefore, had the latter fairly entered into the toils, than twenty topmen rushed out upon them, in order to make sure of their prizes. In an incredibly short time, this important result was achieved. Two or three of

the aspiring adventurers were lashed where they had been found, utterly unable to make any resistance in a spot where instinct itself seemed to urge them to devote both hands to the necessary duty of holding fast; while the rest were transferred, by the means of whips, to different spars, very much as a light sail or a yard would have been swayed into its place.

In the midst of the clamorous rejoicings that attended this success, one individual made himself conspicuous for the gravity and business-like air with which he performed his part of the comedy. Seated on the outer end of a lower yard, with as much steadiness as though he had been placed on an ottoman, he was intently occupied in examining into the condition of a captive, who had been run up at his feet, with an order from the waggish captain of the top, 'to turn him in for a jewel-block;' a name that appears to have been taken from the precious stones that are so often seen pendant from the ears of the other sex.

« Ay, ay, » muttered this deliberate and grave-looking tar, who was no other than Richard Fid, « the stropping you've sent with

the fellow is none of the best; and, if he squeaks so now, what will he do when you come to reeve a rope through him! By the Lord, masters, you should have furnished the lad a better outfit, if you meant to send him into good company aloft. Here are more holes in his jacket than there are cabin windows to a Chinese junk. Hilloa!—on deck there!—you Guinea, pick me up a tailor, and send him aloft, to keep the wind out of this waister's tarpauling. »

The athletic African, who had been posted on the forecastle for his vast strength, cast an eye upward, and, with both arms thrust into his bosom, he rolled along the deck, with just as serious a mien as though he had been sent on a duty of the greatest import. The uproar over his head had drawn a most helpless-looking mortal from a retired corner of the berth-deck, to the ladder of the forward hatch, where, with a body half above the combings, a skein of strong coarse thread around his neck, a piece of bees-wax in one hand, and a needle in the other, he stood staring about him, with just that sort of bewildered air that a

Chinese mandarin would manifest, were he to be suddenly initiated in the mysteries of the ballet. On this object the eye of Scipio fell. Stretching out an arm, he cast him upon his shoulder; and, before the startled subject of his attack knew into whose hands he had fallen, a hook was passed beneath the waistband of his trowsers, and he was half way between the water and the spar, on his way to join the considerate Fid.

« Have a care lest you let the man fall into the sea! » cried Wilder sternly, from his stand on the distant poop.

« He'm tailor, masser Harry, » returned the black, without altering a muscle; « if a clothes no 'trong, he nobody blame but heself. »

During this brief parlance, the good-man Homespun had safely arrived at the termination of his lofty flight. Here he was suitably received by Fid, who raised him to his side; and, having placed him comfortably between the yard and the boom, he proceeded to secure him by a lashing that would give the tailor the proper disposition of his hands.

« Bouse a bit on this waister! » called Richard,

when he had properly secured the good-man ;
« so ; belay all that. »

He then put one foot on the neck of his prisoner, and, seizing his lower member as it swung uppermost, he coolly placed it in the lap of the awe-struck tailor.

« There, friend, » he said, « handle your needle and palm now, as if you were at job-work. Your knowing handicraft always begins with the foundation, wherein he makes sure that his upper gear will stand. »

« The Lord protect me, and all other sinful mortals, from an untimely end ! » exclaimed Homespun, gazing at the vacant view from his giddy elevation, with a sensation a little resembling that with which the aeronaut, in his first experiment, regards the prospect beneath.

« Settle away this waister, » again called Fid ; « he interrupts rational conversation by his noise ; and, as his gear is condemned by this here tailor, why, you may turn him over to the purser for a new outfit. »

The real motive, however, for getting rid of his pendant companion was a twinkling of

humanity, that still glimmered through the rough humour of the tar, who well knew that his prisoner must hang, where he did, at some little expense of bodily ease. As soon as his request was complied with, he turned to the good-man, to renew the discourse, with just as much composure as though they were both seated on the deck, or as if a dozen practical jokes, of the same character, were not in the process of enactment, in as many different parts of the vessel.

« What makes you open your eyes, brother, in this port-hole fashion? » commenced the topman. « This is all water that you see about you, except that hommoc of blue in the eastern board, which is a morsel of upland in the Bahamas, d'ye see. »

« A sinful and presuming world is this we live in! » returned the good-man; « nor can any one tell at what moment his life is to be taken from him. Five bloody and cruel wars have I lived to see in safety, and yet am I reserved to meet this disgraceful and profane end at last. »

« Well, since you've had your luck in the

wars, you've the less reason to grumble at the bit of a surge you may have felt in your garments, as they run you up to this here yard-arm. I say, brother, I've known stouter fellows take the same ride, who never knew when or how they got down again.»

Homespun, who did not more than half comprehend the allusion of Fid, now regarded him in a way that announced some little desire for an explanation, mingled with great admiration of the unconcern with which his companion maintained his position, without the smallest aid from any thing but his self-balancing powers.

« I say, brother, » resumed Fid, « that many a stout seaman has been whipt up to the end of a yard, who has started by the signal of a gun, and who has staid there just as long as the president of a court-martial was pleased to believe might be necessary to improve his honesty ! »

« It would be a fearful and frightful trifling with Providence, in the least offending and conscientious mariner, to take such awful punishments in vain, by acting them in his

sports; but doubly so do I pronounce it in the crew of a ship on which no man can say at what hour retribution and compunction are to alight. It seems to me unwise to tempt Providence by such provoking exhibitions. »

Fid cast a glance of far more than usual significance at the good-man, and even postponed his reply, until he had freshened his ideas by an ample addition to the morsel of weed which he had kept all along thrust into one of his cheeks. Then, casting his eyes about him, in order to see that none of his noisy and riotous companions, of the top, were within ear-shot, he fastened a still more meaning look on the countenance of the tailor, as he responded, —

«Hark ye, brother; whatever may be the other good points of Richard Fid, his friends cannot say he is much of a scholar. This being the case, he has not seen fit to ask a look at the sailing orders, on coming aboard this wholesome vessel. I suppose, howsomever, that they can be forthcoming at need, and that no honest man need be ashamed to be found cruising under the same. »

« Ah ! Heaven protect such unoffending innocents as serve here against their will, when the allotted time of the cruiser shall be filled ! » returned Homespun. « I take it, however, that you, as a sea-faring and understanding man, have not entered into this enterprise without receiving the bounty, and knowing the whole nature of the service. »

« The devil a bit have I entered at all, either in the 'Enterprise' or in the 'Dolphin,' as they call this same craft. There is master Harry, the lad on the poop there, he who hails a yard as soft as a bull-whale roars ; I follow his signals, d'ye see ; and it is seldom that I bother him with questions as to what tack he means to lay his boat on next. »

« What ! would you sell your soul in this manner to Beelzebub ; and that, too, without a price ? »

« I say, friend, it may be as well to overhaul your ideas, before you let them slip, in this no-man's fashion, from your tongue. I would wish to treat a gentleman, who has come aloft to pay me a visit, with such civility as may do credit to my top, though the crew

be at mischief, d'ye see. But an officer like him I follow has a name of his own, without stopping to borrow one of the person you've just seen fit to name. I scorn such a pitiful thing as a threat; but a man of your years needn't be told, that it is just as easy to go down from this here spar as it was to come up to it. »

The tailor cast a glance beneath him into the brine, and hastened to do away the unfavourable impression which his last unfortunate interrogation had so evidently left on the mind of his brawny associate.

« Heaven forbid that I should call any one but by their given and family names, as the law commands, » he said; « I meant merely to inquire, if you would follow the gentleman you serve to so unseemly and pernicious a place as a gibbet? »

Fid ruminated some little time, before he saw fit to reply to so sweeping a query. During this unusual process, he agitated the weed, with which his mouth was nearly gorged, with great industry; and then, terminating both processes, by casting a jet of the juice

nearly to the sprit-sail-yard, he said, in a very decided tone,—

« If I wouldn't, may I be d----d! After sailing in company for four-and-twenty years, I should be no better than a sneak, to part company, because such a trifle as a gallows hove in sight. »

« The pay of such a service should be both generous and punctual, and the cheer of the most encouraging character, » the good-man observed, in a way that manifested he should not be displeased were he to receive a reply. Fid was in no disposition to balk his curiosity, but rather deemed himself bound, since he had once entered on the subject, to leave no part of it in obscurity.

« As for the pay, d'ye see, » he said, « it is seaman's wages. I should despise myself to take less than falls to the share of the best foremast-hand in a ship, since it would be all the same as owning that I got my deserts. But master Harry has a way of his own in rating men's services; and if his ideas get jamm'd in an affair of this sort, it is no marlingspike that I handle which can loosen them.

I once just named the propriety of getting me a quarter-master's berth; but devil the bit would he be doing the thing, seeing, as he says himself, that I have a fashion of getting a little hazy at times, which would only be putting me in danger of disgrace; since every body knows that the higher a monkey climbs in the rigging of a ship, the easier every body on deck can see that he has a tail. Then, as to cheer, it is seaman's fare; sometimes a cut to spare for a friend, and sometimes a hungry stomach. »

« But then there are often divisions of the — a — a — the prize-money, in this successful cruiser? » demanded the good-man, averting his face as he spoke, perhaps from a consciousness that it might betray an unseemly interest in the answer. « I dare say, you receive amends for all your sufferings, when the purser gives forth the spoils. »

• « Hark ye, brother, » said Fid, again assuming a look of significance, « can you tell me where the Admiralty Court sits which condemns her prizes? »

The good-man returned the glance, with

interest; but an extraordinary uproar, in another part of the vessel, cut short the dialogue, just as there was a rational probability it might lead to some consolatory explanations between the parties.

As the action of the tale is shortly to be set in motion again, we shall refer the cause of the commotion to the opening of the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER X.

—— “Come, and get thee a sword, though made of a lath :
They have been up these two days.”

King Henry VI.

WHILE the little by-play that we have just related was enacting on the fore-yard-arm of the rover, scenes, that partook equally of the nature of tragedy and farce, were in the process of exhibition elsewhere. The contest between the possessors of the deck and those active tenants of the top, so often named, was far from having reached its termination. Blows had, in more than one instance, succeeded to angry words ; and, as the former was a part of the sports in which the marines and waisters were on an equality with their more ingenious tormentors, the war was beginning to be waged with some appearances of a very doubtful

success. Nightingale, however, was always ready to recall the combatants to their sense of propriety, with his well-known wind of the call, and his murmuring voice. A long, shrill whistle, with the words, 'Good humour, ahoy!' had hitherto served to keep down the rising tempers of the different parties, when the joke bore too hard on the high-spirited soldier, or the revengeful, though perhaps less mettlesome, member of the after-guard. But an oversight, on the part of him who in common kept so vigilant an eye on the movements of all beneath his orders, had nearly led to results of a far more serious nature.

No sooner had the crew commenced the different rough sports we have just related, than the vein which had induced the Rover to loosen the reins of discipline, for the moment, seemed suddenly to subside. The gay and cheerful air that he had maintained in his dialogue with his female guests (or prisoners, whichever he might be disposed to consider them) had disappeared, in a thoughtful and clouded brow. His eye no longer lighted with those glimmerings of wayward and sarcastic

humour in which he much loved to indulge, but its expression became painfully settled and austere. It was evident that his mind had relapsed into one of those brooding reveries that so often obscured his playful and vivacious mien, as a shadow darkens the golden tints of the field of ripe and waving corn.

While most of those who were not actors in the noisy and humorous achievements of the crew steadily regarded the same, some with wonder, others with distrust, and all with more or less of the humour of the hour, the Rover, to all appearance, was quite unconscious of all that was going on before his face. It is true, that at times he raised his eyes to the active beings who clung like squirrels to the ropes, or suffered them to fall on the duller movements of the men below; but it was always with a vacancy which proved that the image they carried to the brain was dim and illusory. The looks he cast, from time to time, on Mrs Wyllys and her fair and deeply interested pupil, betrayed the workings of the temper of the inward man. It was only in these brief but comprehensive glances that the

feelings by which he was governed might have been, in any manner, traced to their origin. Still would the nicest observer have been puzzled, if not baffled, in endeavouring to pronounce on the entire character of the emotions uppermost in his mind. At instants, it might have been fancied that some unholy and licentious passion was getting the ascendancy; and then, as his eye ran rapidly over the chaste and matronly, though still attractive, countenance of the governess, no imagination was necessary to read the look of doubt, as well as respect, with which he gazed.

It was while thus occupied that the sports proceeded, sometimes humorous, and forcing smiles even from the lips of the half-terrified Gertrude, but always tending to that violence, and outbreking of anger, which might, at any moment, set at naught the discipline of a vessel in which no other means to enforce authority existed, than such as its officers could, on the instant, command. Water had been so lavishly expended, that the decks were running with the fluid, even more than one flight of spray having invaded the privileged precincts of the

poop. Every ordinary device of similar scenes had been resorted to, by the men aloft, to annoy their less advantageously posted ship-mates beneath; and such means of retaliation had been adopted as use or facility rendered obvious. Here, a hog and a waister were seen swinging against each other, pendant beneath a top; there, a marine, lashed in the rigging, was obliged to suffer the manipulation of a pet monkey, which, drilled to the duty, and armed with a comb, was posted on his shoulder, with an air as grave, and an eye as observant, as though he had been regularly educated in the art of the perruquier; and, every where, some coarse and practical joke proclaimed the licentious liberty which had been momentarily accorded to a set of beings who were, in common, kept in that restraint which comfort, no less than safety, requires for the well-ordering of an armed ship.

In the midst of the noise and turbulence, a voice was heard, apparently issuing from the ocean, hailing the vessel by name, with the aid of a speaking-trumpet, that had been applied to the outer circumference of a hawse hole.

« Who speaks the ‘Dolphin?’ » demanded Wilder, in reply, when he perceived that the summons had fallen on the dull ears of his Commander, without recalling him to the recollection of what was in action.

« Father Neptune is under your fore-foot. »

« What wills the God? »

« He has heard that certain strangers have come into his dominions, and he wishes leave to come aboard the saucy ‘Dolphin,’ to inquire into their errands, and to overhaul the log-book of their characters. »

« He is welcome. Shew the old man aboard through the head; he is too experienced a sailor to wish to come in by the cabin windows. »

Here the parlance ceased; for Wilder turned upon his heel, as though he were already disgusted with his part of the mummary.

An athletic seaman soon appeared, seemingly issuing from the element whose deity he aspired to personate. Mops, dripping with brine, supplied the place of hoary locks; gulf-weed, of which acres were floating within a league of the ship, composed a sort of negli-

gent mantle ; and in his hand he bore a trident made of three marlingspikes properly arranged, and borne on the staff of a half-pike. Thus accoutred, the God of the Ocean, who was no less a personage than the captain of the fore-castle, advanced, with a suitable air of dignity, along the deck, attended by a train of bearded water-nymphs and naiades, in a costume no less grotesque than his own. Arrived on the quarter-deck, in front of the position occupied by the officers, the principal personage saluted the groupe with a wave of his sceptre, and resumed the discourse as follows ; Wilder, from the continued abstraction of his Commander, finding himself under the necessity of maintaining one portion of the dialogue.

« A wholesome and prettily-rigged boat have you come out in this time, my son ; and one well filled with a noble set of my children. How long might it be since you left the land ? »

« Some eight days ago. »

« Hardly time enough to give the green ones the use of their sea legs. I shall be able to find them, by the manner in which they hold on in a calm. » [Here the General, who was standing

with a scornful and averted eye, let go his hold of a mizzen shroud, which he had grasped for no other visible reason than to render his person utterly immovable; Neptune smiled, and continued. } «I sha'n't ask concerning the port you are last from, seeing that the Newport soundings are still hanging about the flukes of your anchors. I hope you haven't brought out many fresh hands with you, for I smell the stock-fish aboard a Baltic-man, who is coming down with the trades, and who can't be more than a hundred leagues from this; I shall therefore have but little time to overhaul your people, in order to give them their papers. »

« You see them all before you. So skilful a mariner as Neptune needs no advice when or how to tell a seaman. »

« I shall then begin with this gentleman, » continued the waggish head of the forecastle, turning towards the still motionless chief of the marines. « There is a strong look of the land about him; and I should like to know how many hours it is since he first floated over blue water. »

« I believe he has made many voyages ; and I dare say has long since paid the proper tribute to your Majesty. »

« Well, well ; the thing is like enough, tho'f I will say I have known scholars make better use of their time, if he has been so long on the water as you pretend. How is it with these ladies ? »

« Both have been at sea before, and have a right to pass without a question, » resumed Wilder, a little hastily.

« The youngest is comely enough to have been born in my dominions, » said the gallant Sovereign of the Sea ; « but no one can refuse to answer a hail that comes straight from the mouth of Old Neptune ; so, if it makes no great difference in your Honour's reckoning, I will just beg the young woman to do her own talking. » Then, without paying the least attention to the angry glance that shot from the eye of Wilder, the sturdy representative of the God addressed himself directly to Gertrude. « If, as report goes of you, my pretty damsel, you have seen blue water before this passage, you may be able to recollect the name of

the vessel, and some other small particulars of the run? »

The face of our heroine changed its colour from red to pale, as rapidly, and as glowingly, as the evening sky flushes, and returns to its pearl-like loveliness; but she kept down her feelings sufficiently to answer, with an air of entire self-possession,—

« Were I to enter into all these little particulars, it would detain you from more worthy subjects. Perhaps this certificate will convince you that I am no novice on the sea. » As she spoke, a guinea fell from her white hand into the broad and extended palm of her interrogator.

« I can only account for my not remembering your Ladyship, by the great extent and heavy nature of my business, » returned the audacious freebooter, bowing with an air of rude politeness as he pocketed the offering. « Had I looked into my books before I came aboard this here ship, I should have seen through the mistake at once; for I now remember that I ordered one of my limners to take your pretty face, in order that I might shew it to my wife

at home. The fellow did it well enough, in the shell of an East-India oyster; I will have a copy set in coral, and sent to your husband, whenever you may see fit to choose one. »

Then, repeating his bow, with a scrape of the foot, he turned to the governess, in order to continue his examination.

« And you, Madam, » he said, « is this the first time you have ever come into my dominions, or not? »

« Neither the first, nor the twentieth; I have often seen your Majesty before. »

« An old acquaintance! In what latitude might it be that we first fell in with each other? »

« I believe I first enjoyed that honour, quite thirty years since, under the Equator. »

« Ay, ay, I'm often there, looking out for Indiamen and your homeward-bound Brazil traders. I boarded a particularly great number that very season, but can't say I remember your countenance. »

« I fear that thirty years have made some changes in it, » returned the governess, with a smile, which, though mournful, was far too

dignified in its melancholy, to induce the suspicion that she regretted a loss so vain as that of her personal charms. « I was in a vessel of the King, and one that was a little remarkable by its size, since it was of three decks. »

The God received the guinea, which was now secretly offered, but it would seem that success had quickened his covetousness; for, instead of returning thanks, he rather appeared to manifest a disposition to increase the amount of the bribe.

« All this may be just as your Ladyship says, » he rejoined; « but the interest of my kingdom, and a large family at home, make it necessary that I should look sharp to my rights. Was there a flag in the vessel? »

« There was. »

« Then, it is likely they hoisted it, as usual, at the end of the jib-boom? »

« It was hoisted, as is usual with a Vice-Admiral, at the fore. »

« Well answered, for petticoats! » muttered the Deity, a little baffled in his artifice. « It is d---d queer, saving your Ladyship's presence, that I should have forgotten such a ship: Was

there any thing of the extraordinary sort, that one would be likely to remember? »

The features of the governess had already lost their forced pleantry, in a shade of grave reflection, and her eye was evidently fastened on vacancy, as she answered, to all appearance like one who thought, aloud.—

« I can, at this moment, see the arch and roguish manner with which that wayward boy, who then had but eight years, over-reached the cunning of the mimic Neptune, and retaliated for his devices, by turning the laugh of all on board on his own head! »

« Was he but eight? » demanded a deep voice at her elbow.

« Eight in years, but maturer in artifice, » returned Mrs Wyllys, seeming to awake from a trance, as she turned her eyes full upon the face of the Rover.

« Well, well, » interrupted the captain of the forecastle, who cared not to continue an inquiry in which his dreaded Commander saw fit to take a part, « I dare say it is all right. I will look into my journal; if I find it so, well—if not, why, it's only giving the ship a

head-wind, until I've overhauled the Dane, and then it will be all in good time to receive the balance of the fee.»

So saying, the God hurried past the officers, and turned his attention to the marine guard, who had grouped themselves in a body, secretly aware of the necessity each man might be under of receiving support from his fellows, in so searching a scrutiny. Perfectly familiar with the career each individual among them had run, in his present lawless profession, and secretly apprehensive that his authority might be forced suddenly from him; the chief of the forecastle selected a raw landsman from among them, bidding his attendants to drag the victim forward, where he believed they might act the cruel revels he contemplated with less danger of interruption. Already irritated by the laughs which had been created at their expense, and resolute to defend their comrade, the marines resisted. A long, clamorous, and angry dispute succeeded, during which each party maintained its right to pursue the course it had adopted. From words the disputants were not long in passing to the signs of hostilities.

It was while the peace of the ship hung, as it were, suspended by a hair, that the General saw fit to express the disgust of such an outrage upon discipline, which had, throughout the whole scene, possessed his mind.

“I protest against this riotous and unmilitary procedure,” he said, addressing himself to his still abstracted and thoughtful superior. “I have taught my men, I trust, the proper spirit of soldiers, and there is no greater disgrace can happen to one of them than to lay hands on him, except it be in the regular and wholesome way of a cat.—I give open warning to all, that, if a finger is put upon one of my bullies, unless, as I have said, in the way of discipline, it will be answered with a blow.”

As the General had not essayed to smother his voice, it was heard by his followers, and produced the effect which might have been expected. A vigorous thrust from the fist of the sergeant drew mortal blood from the visage of the God of the Sea, and at once established his terrestrial origin. Thus compelled to support his manhood, in more senses than one, the stout seaman returned the salutation, with

such additional embellishments as the exigencies of the moment seemed to require. Such an interchange of civilities, between two so prominent personages, was the signal of general hostilities among their respective followers. The uproar that attended the onset had caught the attention of Fid, who, the instant he saw the nature of the sports below, abandoned his companion on the yard, and slid downwards to the deck by the aid of a backstay, with about as much facility as that caricature of man, the monkey, could have performed the same manœuvre. His example was followed by all the topmen; and, in less than a minute, there was every appearance that the audacious marines would be borne down by the sheer force of numbers. But, stout in their resolution, and bitter in their hostility, these drilled and resentful warriors, instead of seeking refuge in flight, fell back upon each other, for support. Bayonets were seen gleaming in the sun; while some of the seamen, in the exterior of the crowd, were already laying their hands on the half-pikes that formed a warlike ornament to the foot of the mast.

« Hold! stand back, every man of you! » cried Wilder, dashing into the centre of the throng, and forcing them aside, with a haste that was possibly quickened by the recollection of the increased danger that would surround the unprotected females, should the bands of subordination be once fairly broken among so lawless and desperate a crew. « On your lives, fall back, and obey. And you, sir, who claim to be so good a soldier, I call on you to bid your men refrain. »

The General, however disgusted he might have been by the previous scene, had too many important interests involved in the interior peace of the vessel, not to exert himself at this appeal. He was seconded by all the inferior officers, who well knew that their lives, as well as their comfort, depended on staying the torrent that had so unexpectedly broken loose. But they only proved how hard it is to uphold an authority that is not established on the foundation of legitimate power. Neptune had cast aside his masquerade; and, backed by all his stout forecastle-men, was evidently preparing for a conflict that might speedily give

him greater pretensions to immortal nature than those he had just rejected. Until now, the officers, partly by threats and partly by remonstrances, had so far controlled the out-breaking, that the time had been passed rather in preparations than in violence. But the marines had seized their arms; while two crowded masses of the mariners were forming on either side of the mainmast, abundantly provided with pikes, and such other weapons as the bars and handspikes of the vessel afforded. One or two of the cooler heads among the latter had even proceeded so far as to clear away a gun, which they were pointing inboard, and in a direction that might have swept a moiety of the quarter-deck. In short, the broil had just reached that pass when another blow, struck from either side, must have given up the vessel to plunder and massacre. The danger of such a crisis was heightened by the bitter taunts that broke forth from fifty profane lips, which were only opened to lavish the coarsest revilings on the persons and characters of their respective enemies.

During the five minutes that might have

flown by in such sinister and threatening symptoms of insubordination, the individual who was chiefly interested in the maintenance of discipline had manifested the most extraordinary indifference, or rather unconsciousness, to all that was passing so near him. With his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes fastened on the placid sea, he stood motionless as the mast near which he had placed his person. Long accustomed to the noise of scenes similar to the one he had himself provoked, he heard, in the confused sounds which rose unheeded on his ear, no more than the commotion which ordinarily attended the license of the hour.

His subordinates in command, however, were far more active. Wilder had already beaten back the boldest of the seamen, and a space was cleared between the hostile parties, into which his assistants threw themselves, with the haste of men who knew how much was required at their hands. This momentary success might have been pushed too far; for, believing that the spirit of mutiny was subdued, our adventurer was proceeding to improve his advantage, by seizing the most audacious

of the offenders, when his prisoner was immediately torn from his grasp by twenty of his confederates.

“Who’s this, that sets himself up for a Commodore aboard the ‘Dolphin!’” exclaimed a voice in the crowd, at a most unhappy moment for the authority of the new lieutenant. “In what fashion did he come aboard us? or, in what service did he learn his trade?”

“Ay, ay,” continued another sinister voice, “where is the Bristol trader he was to lead into our net, and for which we lost so many of the best days in the season, at a lazy anchor?”

Then broke forth a general and simultaneous murmur, which, had such testimony been wanting, would in itself have manifested that the unknown officer was scarcely more fortunate in his present than in his recent service. Both parties united in condemning his interference; and from both sides were heard scornful opinions of his origin, mingled with certain fierce denunciations against his person. Nothing daunted by such palpable evidences of the danger of his situation, our adventurer

answered to their taunts with the most scornful smiles, challenging a single individual of them all to dare to step forth, and maintain his words by suitable actions.

« Hear him ! » exclaimed his auditors.—« He speaks like a King's officer in chase of a smuggler ! » cried one. — « Ay, he's a bold'un in a calm, » said a second. — « He's a Jonah, that has slipp'd into the cabin windows ! » cried a third ; « and, while he stays in the ' Dolphin, ' luck will keep upon our weather-beam. » — « Into the sea with him ! overboard with the upstart ! into the sea with him ! where he'll find that a bolder and a better man has gone before him ! » shouted a dozen at once ; some of whom immediately gave very unequivocal demonstrations of an intention to put their threat in execution. But two forms instantly sprang from the crowd, and threw themselves, like angry lions, between Wilder and his foes. The one, who was foremost in the rescue, faced short upon the advancing seamen, and, with a blow from an arm that was irresistible, levelled the representative of Neptune to his feet, as though he had been a mere waxen image of a

man. The other was not slow to imitate his example; and, as the throng receded before this secession from its own numbers, the latter, who was Fid, flourished a fist that was as big as the head of a sizeable infant, while he loudly vociferated, —

“ Away with ye, ye lubbers! away with ye! Would you run foul of a single man, and he an officer, and such an officer as ye never set eyes on before, except, mayhap, in the fashion that a cat looks upon a king? I should like to see the man, among ye all, who can handle a heavy ship, in a narrow channel, as I have seen master Harry here handle the saucy ” — —

“ Stand back, ” cried Wilder, forcing himself between his defenders and his foes. “ Stand back, I say, and leave me alone to meet the audacious villains. ”

“ Overboard with him! overboard with them all! ” cried the seamen, “ he and his knaves together! ”

“ Will you remain silent, and see murder done before your eyes? ” exclaimed Mrs Wyllys, rushing from her place of retreat, and laying a hand eagerly on the arm of the Rover.

He started like one who was awakened suddenly from a light sleep, looking her full and intently in the eye.

« See ! » she added, pointing to the violent throng below, where every sign of an increased commotion was exhibiting itself. « See, they kill your officer, and there is none to help him ! »

The look of faded marble, which had so long been seated on his features, vanished, as his eye passed quickly over the scene. The organs took in the whole nature of the action at the glance; and, with the intelligence, the blood came rushing into every vein and fibre of his indignant face. Seizing a rope, which hung from the yard above his head, he swung his person off the poop, and fell lightly into the very centre of the crowd. Both parties fell back, while a sudden and breathing silence succeeded to a clamour that a moment before would have drowned the roar of a cataract. Making a haughty and repelling motion with his arm, he spoke, and in a voice that, if any change could be noted, was even pitched on a key less high and threatening than common.

But the lowest and the deepest of its intonations reached the most distant ear, and no one who heard was left to doubt its meaning.

“Mutiny!” he said, in a tone that strangely balanced between irony and scorn; “open, violent, and blood-seeking mutiny! Are ye tired of your lives, my men? Is there one, among ye all, who is willing to make himself an example for the good of the rest? If there be, let him lift a hand, a finger, a hair: Let him speak, look me in the eye, or dare to shew that life is in him, by sign, breath, or motion!”

He paused; and so general and absorbing was the spell produced by his presence and his mien, that, in all that crowd of fierce and excited spirits, there was not one so bold as to presume to brave his anger. Sailors and marines stood alike, passive, humbled, and obedient, as faulty children, when arraigned before an authority from which they feel, in every fibre, that escape is impossible. Perceiving that no voice answered, no limb moved, nor even an eye among them all was bold enough to meet his own steady but glowing

look, he continued, in the same deep and commanding tone,—

« It is well: Reason has come of the latest; but, happily for ye all, it has returned. Fall back, fall back, I say; you taint the quarter-deck.» — The men receded a pace or two on every side of him. — « Let those arms be stacked; it will be time to use them when I proclaim the need. And you, fellows, who have been so bold as to lift a pike without an order, have a care they do not burn your hands.» — A dozen staves fell upon the deck together. — « Is there a drummer in this ship? let him appear!»

A terrified and cringing-looking being presented himself, having found his instrument by a sort of desperate instinct.

« Now speak aloud, and let me know at once whether I command a crew of orderly and obedient men, or a set of miscreants, that require some purifying before I trust them.»

The first few taps of the drum sufficed to tell the men they heard the 'beat to quarters.' Without hesitating a reluctant moment, the crowd dissolved, and each of the delinquents

stole silently to his station; the crew of the gun that had been turned inward managing to thrust it through its port again, with a dexterity that might have availed them greatly in time of combat. Throughout the whole affair, the Rover had manifested neither anger nor impatience. Deep and settled scorn, with a high reliance on himself, had, indeed, been exhibited in the proud curl of his lip, and in the swelling of his form, but not, for an instant, did it seem that he had suffered his ire to get the mastery of his reason. And, now that he had recalled his crew to their duty, he appeared no more elated with his success than he had been daunted by the storm which, a minute before, had threatened the utter dissolution of his authority. Instead of pursuing his further purpose in haste, he awaited the observance of the minutest form which etiquette, as well as use, had rendered customary on such occasions.

The officers approached, and reported their several divisions in readiness to engage, with exactly the same regularity as if an enemy had been in sight. The topmen and sail-trimmers

were enumerated, and found prepared; shot-plugs and stoppers were handled; the magazine was even opened; the arm-chests emptied of their contents; and, in short, far more than the ordinary preparations of an every day exercise was observed.

« Let the yards be slung; the sheets and hal-yards stoppered, » he said to the first lieutenant, who now displayed as intimate an acquaintance with the military as he had hitherto discovered with the nautical part of his profession; « Give the boarders their pikes and boarding-axes, sir; we will now shew these fellows that we dare to trust them with arms! »

These several orders were obeyed to the letter; and then succeeded that deep and grave silence which renders a crew, at quarters, a sight so imposing, even to those who have witnessed it from their boyhood. In this manner, the skilful leader of this band of desperate marauders knew how to curb their violence with the fetters of discipline. When he believed their minds brought within the proper limits, by the situation of restraint in which he had placed them, where they well

knew that a word, or even a look, of offence would be met by an instant as well as an awful punishment, he walked apart with Wilder, of whom he demanded an explanation of what had passed.

Whatever might have been the natural tendency of our adventurer to mercy, he had not been educated on the sea to look with lenity on the crime of mutiny. Had his recent escape from the wreck of the Bristol trader been already banished from his mind, the impressions of a whole life still remained to teach the necessity of keeping tight those cords which experience has so often proved are absolutely necessary to quell such turbulent bands, when removed from the pale of society, the influence of woman, and when excited by the constant collision of tempers rudely provoked, and equally disposed to violence. Though he 'set down naught in malice,' it is certain that he did 'nothing extenuate,' in the account he rendered. The whole of the facts were laid before the Rover in the direct, unvarnished language of truth.

"One cannot keep these fellows to their duty

by preaching," returned the irregular chief, when the other had done. "We have no 'Execution Dock' for our delinquents, no 'yellow flag' for fleets to gaze at, no grave and wise-looking courts to thumb a book or two, and end by saying, 'Hang him.' — The rascals knew my eye was off them. Once before, they turned my vessel into a living evidence of that passage in the Testament which teaches humility to all, by telling us, 'that the last shall be first, and the first last.' I found a dozen roundabouts drinking and making free with the liquors of the cabin, and all the officers prisoners forward—a state of things, as you will allow, a little subversive of decency as well as decorum!"

"I am amazed you should have succeeded in restoring discipline!"

"I got among them single-handed, and with no other aid than a boat from the shore; but I ask no more than a place for my foot, and room for an arm, to keep a thousand such spirits in order. Now they know me, it is rare we misunderstand each other."

"You must have punished severely!"

“There was justice done.—Mr Wilder, I fear you find our service a little irregular; but a month of experience will put you on a level with us, and remove all danger of such another scene.” As the Rover spoke, he faced his recruit, with a countenance that endeavoured to be cheerful, but whose gaiety could force itself no further than a frightful smile. “Come,” he quickly added, “this time, I set the mischief afoot myself; and, as you see we are completely masters, we may afford to be lenient. Besides,” he continued, glancing his eyes towards the place where Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude still remained in deep suspense, awaiting his decision, “it may be well to consult the sex of our guests at such a moment.”

Then, leaving his subordinate, the Rover advanced to the centre of the quarter-deck, whither he immediately summoned the principal offenders. The men listened to his rebukes, which were not altogether free from admonitory warnings of what might be the consequences of a similar transgression, like creatures who stood in presence of a being of a nature superior to their own. Though he

spoke in his usual quiet tone, the lowest of his syllables went into the ears of the most distant of the crew; and, when his brief lesson was ended, the men stood before him not only like delinquents who had been reproved though pardoned, but with the air of criminals who were as much condemned by their own consciousness as by the general voice. Among them all was only one seaman who, perhaps from past service, was emboldened to venture a syllable in his own justification.

« As for the matter with the marines, » he said, « your Honour knows there is little love between us, though certain it is a quarter-deck is no place to settle our begrudgings; but, as to the gentleman who has seen fit to step into the shoes of » —

« It is my pleasure that he should remain there, » hastily interrupted his Commander. « Of his merit I alone can judge. »

« Well, well, since it is your pleasure, sir, why, no man can dispute it. But no account has been rendered of the Bristol-man, and great expectations were had aboard here from that very ship. Your Honour is a reasonable gentle-

man, and will not be surprised that people, who are on the look-out for an outward-bound West-Indiaman, should be unwilling to take up with a battered and empty launch, in her stead. »

« Ay, sir, if I will it, you shall take an oar, a tiller, a thole, for your portion. No more of this ! You saw the condition of his ship with your own eyes ; and where is the seaman who has not, on some evil day, been compelled to admit that his art is nothing, when the elements are against him ? Who saved this ship, in the very gust that has robbed us of our prize ? Was it your skill ? or was it that of a man who has often done it before, and who may one day leave you to your ignorance to manage your own interests ? It is enough that I believe him faithful. There is no time to convince your dulness of the propriety of all that's done. Away, and send me the two men who so nobly stepped between their officer and mutiny. »

Then came Fid, followed by the negro, rolling along the deck, and thumbing his hat with one hand, while the other sought an awkward retreat in a part of his vestments.

« You have done well, my lad ; you and your messmate » —

« No messmate, your Honour, seeing that he is a nigger, » interrupted Fid. « The chap messes with the other blacks, but we take a pull at the can, now and then, in company. »

« Your friend, then, if you prefer that term. »

« Ay, ay, sir ; we are friendly enough at odd times, though a breeze often springs up between us. Guinea has a d----d awkward fashion of luffing up in his talk ; and your Honour knows it isn't always comfortable to a white man to be driven to leeward by a black. I tell him it is inconvenient. He is a good enough fellow in the main, howsomever, sir ; and, as he is just an African bred and born, I hope you'll be good enough to overlook his little failings. »

« Were I otherwise disposed, » returned the Rover, « his steadiness and activity to-day would plead in his favour. »

« Yes, yes, sir, he is somewhat steady, which is more than I can always say in my own behalf. Then, as for seamanship, there are few men who are his betters ; I wish your Honour would take the trouble to walk forward, and look at

the heart he turned in the mainstay, no later than the last calm; it takes the strain as easy as a small sin sits upon a rich man's conscience. »

« I am satisfied with your description; you call him Guinea? »

« Call him by any thing along that coast; for he is noway particular, seeing he was never christened, and knows nothing at all of the bearings and distances of religion. His lawful name is S'ip, or Shipio Africa, taken, as I suppose, from the circumstance that he was first shipp'd from that quarter of the world. But, as respects names, the fellow is as meek as a lamb; you may call him any thing, provided you don't call him too late to his grog. »

All this time, the African stood, rolling his large dark eyes in every direction except towards the speakers, perfectly content that his long-tried shipmate should serve as his interpreter. The spirit which had, so recently, been awakened in the Rover seemed already to be subsiding; for the haughty frown, which had gathered on his brow, was dissipating in a look which bore rather the character of curiosity than any fiercer emotion.

“ You have sailed long in company, my lads,” he carelessly continued, addressing his words to neither of them in particular.

“ Full and by, in many a gale, and many a calm, your Honour. ’Tis four-and-twenty years the last equinox, Guinea, since master Harry fell across our hawse; and, then, we had been together three years in the ‘Thunderer,’ besides the run we made round the Horn, in the ‘Bay’ privateer.”

“ Ah! you have been four-and-twenty years with Mr Wilder? It is not so remarkable that you should set a value on his life.”

“ I should as soon think of setting a price on the King’s crown!” interrupted the straight-going seaman. “ I overheard the lads, d’ye see, sir, just plotting to throw the three of us overboard, and so we thought it time to say something in our own favour; and, words not always being at hand, the black saw fit to fill up the time with something that might answer the turn quite as well. No, no, he is no great talker, that Guinea; nor, for that matter, can I say much in my own favour in this particular; but, seeing that we clapp’d a stopper on their

movements, your Honour will allow that we did as well as if we had spoken as smartly as a young midshipman fresh from college, who is always for hailing a top in Latin, you know, sir, for want of understanding the proper language."

The Rover smiled, and he glanced his eye aside, apparently in quest of the form of our adventurer. Not seeing him at hand, he was tempted to push his covert inquiries a little further, though too much governed, by self-respect, to let the intense curiosity by which he was influenced escape him in any direct and manifest interrogation. But an instant's recollection recalled him to himself, and he discarded the idea as unworthy of his character.

"Your services shall not be forgotten. Here is gold," he said, offering a handful of the metal to the negro, as the one nearest his own person. "You will divide it, like honest shipmates; and you may ever rely on my protection."

Scipio drew back, and, with a motion of his elbow, replied, —

"His Honour will give 'em masser Harry."

« Your master Harry has it of his own, lad; he has no need of money. »

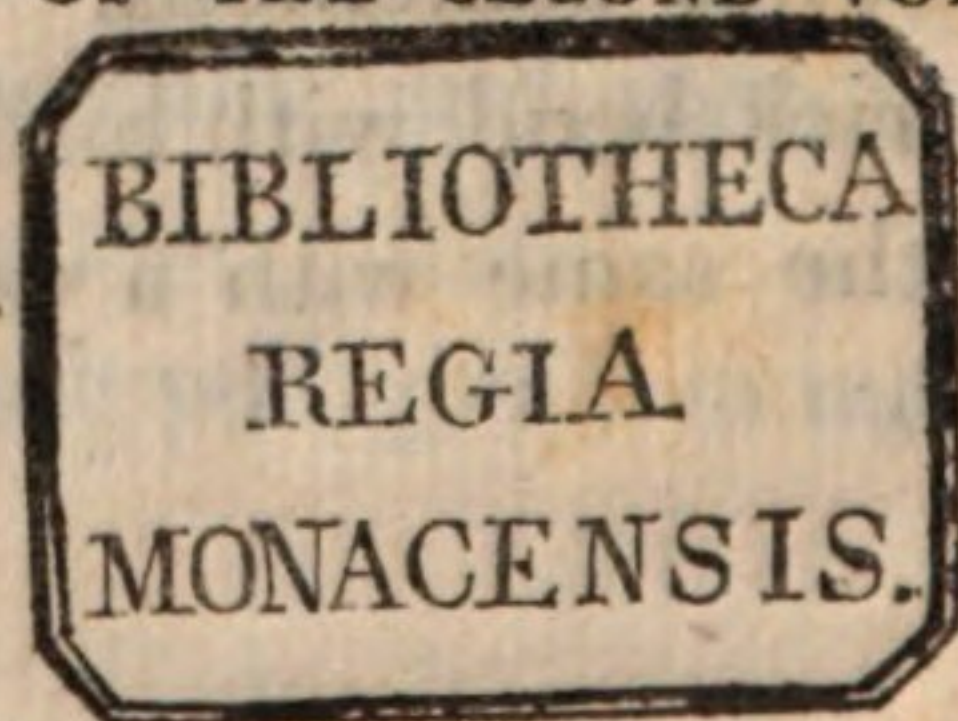
« A S'ip no need 'em eider. »

« You will please to overlook the fellow's manners, sir, » said Fid, very coolly interposing his own hand, and just as deliberately pocketing the offering; « but I needn't tell as old a seaman as your Honour, that Guinea is no country to scrape down the seams of a man's behaviour in. Howsomever, I can say this much for him, which is, that he thanks your Honour just as heartily as if you had given him twice the sum. Make a bow to his Honour, boy, and do some credit to the company you have kept. And now, since this little difficulty about the money is gotten over, by my presence of mind, with your Honour's leave, I'll just step aloft, and cast loose the lashings of that bit of a tailor on the larboard fore-yard-arm. The chap was never made for a topman, as you may see, sir, by the fashion in which he crosses his lower stanchions. That fellow will make a carrick bend with his legs as easily as I could do the same with a yarn of white line! »

The Rover signed for him to retire; and, turning where he stood, he found himself confronted by Wilder. The eyes of the confederates met; and a slight colour bespoke the consciousness of the former. Regaining his self-possession on the instant, however, he smilingly alluded to the character of Fid; and then, with an air of authority, he directed his lieutenant to have the 'retreat from quarters' beat.

The guns were secured, the stoppers loosened, the magazine closed, the ports lashed, and the crew withdrew to their several ordinary duties, like men whose violence had been completely subdued by the triumphant influence of a master spirit. The Rover then disappeared from the deck, which, for a time, was left to the care of an officer of the proper station.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





Werner



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